

CityMagazine

January 1977

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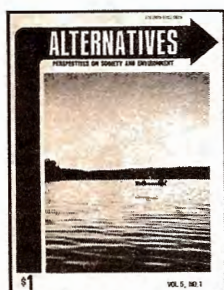
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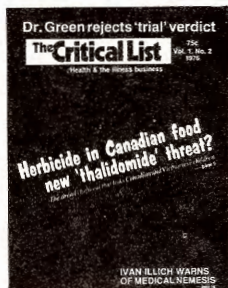
John Sewell on the suburbs

**The planning concept • E.P. Taylor's Don Mills model •
High house prices and urban sprawl: the consequences of
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CANADIAN MAGAZINES



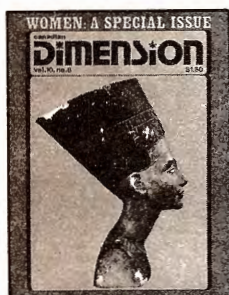
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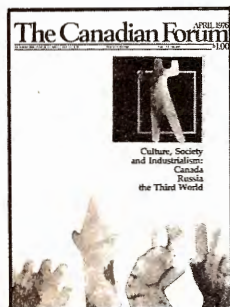
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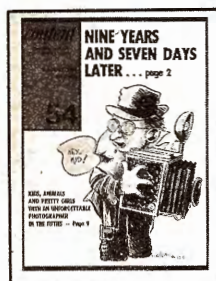
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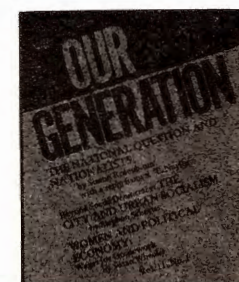
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About this issue...

This special issue on the suburbs is a departure for us. We've never before devoted the articles section of the magazine to a single subject or a single author.

We decided on this departure from our normal practices because of the importance and interest which we thought John Sewell's work would have.

Sewell is, of course, neither a writer nor an urban professional: he's a practising city politician in Toronto, one of the early and most influential of the recent citizen-oriented reform politicians. His involvement in city politics came first as a community organizer in Trefann court.

Sewell ran for office as alderman in 1969, and once in office he mounted a critique on the old-guard politicians which firmly fixed in the public mind the fact of the control of city hall by the development industry. Sewell demonstrated successfully that it was the developers' boys at city hall who were making all the major decisions about expressways, high-rise redevelopment, and urban renewal that posed a severe threat to many neighbourhoods. Sewell wrote about his experiences and his successes in *Up Against City Hall*, a political autobiography which ends in 1972.

An invitation to deliver a major paper on the suburbs at a CCURR-sponsored conference on land in Winnipeg in September prompted Sewell and his associate, Susan Richardson, to undertake a critique of suburban development in Canada. Sewell investigated the history of Don Mills, Canada's first large-scale corporate suburb, and went back to basics to discover why it is that suburban-style development is the only form of urban growth now occurring in most Canadian cities.

The result — the articles in this special issue — offers for the first time a coherent, alternative analysis of suburbia which matches in importance the work done earlier by Sewell and other Canadian writers to develop an alternative analysis of city politics itself and the process of downtown redevelopment. Sewell's focus is always Toronto, because it is the city he knows well, but his discussion applies to all medium and large cities where the same planning ideas and the same corporate developers are at work.

We're sure that all our readers whose interests or work touch on suburbia — citizen activists, planners, architects, politicians, students of urban studies — will find Sewell's work to be of special interest.

LETTERS

Planners and reality

In *City Magazine* (Vol.2, No.5), Susan Cameron wrote trenchantly and to the point about "American paradigms." Her comment stemmed from a Rutgers University conference, in September last, on "Planning Challenge and Response."

Now, it happens that I was one of the two Canadians who spoke. I recall that I put in a plea for an infusion of horse-sense into a somewhat rarified stratospheric discussion. I'd like to back up Ms. Cameron in her view of "old-guard intellectuals," lost in "their own academic grandeur." These are by no means an American monopoly. Not long ago, I spent a sabbatical year in an Ivy League university, and an eminent visiting fireman from Britain turned up, to lecture about "catastrophe theory in relation to urban structural modelling." Catastrophe, for him, was not 9,000 abandoned houses in Philadelphia, or the enormous infected glands that are the metropolitan areas in most "Third World" countries, but a step in a theoretical graph curve. How irrelevant can one get? I was too polite to enquire what made him imagine that the hard-pressed British taxpayer owed him a good living, for sitting on his duff producing this sort of quatsch. After all, he was a pleasant soul to meet at a wine and cheese. As it happened I didn't have to say anything — the first interlocutor at discussion time enquired what conceivable use or interest might all this be except to a handful of devoted readers of the more abstruse academic journals. Nobody answered that point. Later, somebody else privately referred to it as intellectual masturbation. I concur.

I find that there are any number of folk, in the academic world who feel just the same way about this sort of thing. David Harvey is one of the more articulate. His *Social Justice in the City* is surely one of the most relevant books, on cities, to have come

out of the academic world. In it, he says roundly: "There is a clear disparity between the sophisticated theoretical and methodological framework which we are using, and our ability to say anything really meaningful about events as they unfold around us. There are too many anomalies between what we purport to explain and manipulate, and what actually happens. (p. 128 ff.) These are strong words. The matter is further well put in other important books, such as Theodore Roszak's *Where the Wasteland Ends*, and Ernest F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*. I implore my students to read these on the basis that wisdom is more important than knowledge, even if they are not formal "required reading" in a narrow sense, for a course in urban geography.

The point is, of course, that we have become bemused by our science and technology. In the behavioural "sciences", and in geography, to say nothing of city and regional planning, a good deal of effort has been wasted, trying to adopt ways of learning and thinking proper to the natural sciences. This is an exercise in futility. To lay this at the door of the academic elite is less than fair. It stems from the general malaise of our pop-top plastic society, forever corner-cutting by missing out on the deeper truth.

The more clear-headed of academics are in the forefront of the questioners. Melvin Levin wrote in the journal of the American Society of Planning Officials, Sept., 1976, that "the trouble with America's graduate schools of planning is that they are not teaching young people to be planners." This is pretty much what Ms. Cameron wrote, in her comment on the Rutgers conference.

If I were to ask a student to write an essay on the Venus of Milo, and he were to produce the old bust-waist-hips statistics, or to discuss the body metabolism which produces certain identifiable results, I would hardly regard him as displaying any profound understanding of the Venus. Likewise, a city is not to be understood in terms of entropy maximization models or concentric zones, or factorial sectoriality. It may be useful to have a valid frame of reference, and to work out theory as a tool for organising one's thoughts. But the thing has been taken altogether too far.

A city is a real-life phenomenon,

and there comes a time when the most meticulous theories are not going to be very helpful. They're also very boring for the students — of this I am aware from numerous sources.

So, when I talk about urban geography or planning, I prefer to lean heavily on case studies. Rotterdam, for instance, is several light years ahead of most American cities, in the effectiveness of its administration, planning, layout, quality of life, and so on. How come? This state of affairs is certainly not to be understood in terms of scientific paradigms or theoretical models. Firstly, one must tell the students about Erasmus, and the Rhine traffic and Evropoort, and the Dutch tradition of effective municipal government, based on a more appropriate appreciation of the interaction of social and individual interest than the conventional wisdom of North American boardrooms allows. Most important, one should point out that one evening in May 1940, the Luftwaffe wiped out the city centre. Most cities would benefit from being bombed every so often, but it is much better to have that done by somebody else's air force, rather than by real estate developers. In Rotterdam, as in Coventry or Hanoi (Richard Nixon is really too limited in his experience to have understood this), wartime destruction simply released creative communal energy, applied to reconstruction. Students who were not even a gleam in father's eye when Rotterdam was bombed seem to understand this readily enough. (Is it a pity that Jersey City couldn't be bombed too?)

Cities are for people, about people, and made by people, and no one concerned with cities in any capacity should miss that point, least of all academics. Melvin Levin, himself the head of a reputable school of city planning, in his A.S.P.O. article, "Why Can't Johnny Plan?" pointed out that, in days of yore, planning schools were often tacked on to schools of architecture, and run by land-use planners, mostly innocent of Ph.D.'s but with wide practical experience. There were limitations, but there was contact with reality. Then, as Levin puts it, "the first assault of doctorate-bearing academics into the planning schools was made by technocrats whose first love was mathematics ... for years, the Journal of the American Institute of Planners looked more like a math text than a planning journal." Then came a sec-

ond wave of academics, strong on political science, sociology and so forth. In the same vein as Ms. Cameron, Levin goes on, "the academic mandarins have developed a careful pecking order, an impenetrable jargon, and an all-round aloofness, not to say arrogance, towards real-world practitioners."

We do seem to suffer less in Canada from this condition and it is not universal even in America. But academics aren't the only target. Bureaucrats are real-world, but also prone to unrealism. I've just come across a honey of an example. I live in a very well-defined area of Montréal, which is teaming with community organizations and doers of good works. The provincial government is setting up a network of Local Community Service Centres, each serving a given number of people. To achieve this our neighbourhood has been neatly bisected, divided between two new and artificial units. This is a small-scale infusion of DDT into the body politic, and a minor illustration of a major point.

Roszak's powerful book, which I have cited already, which is subtitled *Politics and Transcendence in Post-industrial Society*, strips away much pretension. He defines the valid limits of the scientific approach, and its diminishing relevance to our post-industrial problem. He sets Blake and Goethe and Wordsworth against Bacon and Descartes. Let us not scorn academics, as such. Roszak is one himself — and his book is required text in at least one course (on post-industrial society), in a graduate planning school. As also is *Deschooling Society*, by Ivan Illich. The "urban problem", in its many manifestations across the world, in sum, our modern social problem. All possible fields of study and endeavour are relevant.

R.W.G. Bryant

Good work

Your magazine is refreshing. I especially enjoyed *American Paradigms* by Susan Cameron (Vol.2, No.5). Although this view of academics is popular among planning practitioners I wished that it would broach the issue of pulling together the work of

the stars on societal guidance, social learning etc. and the attempts of practitioners to provide insight into current planning problems. Does all the responsibility for synthesis lie with academics or might we also encourage practitioners to look beyond the provisions of the planning act with which they are forced to deal?

Bryan Hill

On the road

Next time you have an offering by Kent Gerecke, may I suggest that you check his facts to ensure that he is not repeating unfounded rumours, as he did in the article on Kitchener you published in your June issue. Every

community has a contact for those interested in commercial and industrial development. The Marathon proposal is being negotiated with a committee of the Kitchener Chamber of Commerce under their contract with the City of Kitchener to act as industrial development officers for the City. I am not a member of that committee, nor its chairman, nor am I involved in any way in the negotiations.

Mr. Gerecke's remarks charging that Kitchener has been ripped off, or will be ripped off again, ignore the fact that the Oxlea/Eaton development has been successful in revitalizing an aging downtown; they ignore the fact that there is a positive return on the City's investment. As a result of that revitalization, Marathon Realty is now interested in participating in the downtown section of the City of Kitchener, joining a considerable list which includes

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CITY COMMISSIONERS

Corporation Square, Canada Permanent and the Valhalla Inn, the revitalization of the Kitchener - Waterloo Record building, the Bank of Montreal and, soon to come, the Bank of Commerce and the Toronto Dominion Bank. The seeds planted in the Oxlea development are bearing fruit. That this is an important function in this part of the 20th century is clearly demonstrated and supported by the Provincial Government's recent action in offering to give financial support to cities in Ontario with aging downtowns, whose local initiative has not matched that of the Kitchener citizens.

I would like to remind Messrs. Gerecke and Pasternak et al that the real story of the Oxlea/Eaton transaction would reveal citizen participation from the inception of an Urban Renewal scheme to the point where a specific deal was to be undertaken; and, at that point, as might be expected, the participants in those discussions wished the opportunity for private negotiations leading up to a firm proposal. When the proposal was ready, it was made public. All the wailing, book-writing and gnashing

of teeth can't change the fact that those citizens who wished to pay attention were amply informed of the overall Urban Renewal scheme, in advance, through newspaper stories, television broadcasts, radio news stories, and well publicized block meetings. The ultimate success of the Oxlea/Eaton negotiations brought the City of Kitchener to its present status as a model for other communities facing the collapse of their downtown core, its replacement by land-wasting suburban shopping centres, and the loss of downtown's potential as a "people place" and crossroads for public transportation.

There are communities in Ontario which haven't taken this kind of action and, now that energy is becoming more expensive, their difficulties are being recognized by the Province with efforts to restore core areas as a part of an overall energy and land saving exercise of considerable importance to the people of the Province.

Messrs. Gerecke and Pasternak could better serve the Province and their community by getting off the side of the road where the critics park

and moving into the participation process in their community, as active members, offering positive contributions to the future of the core areas of Ontario's cities.

W.D. McGregor
President
Central Ontario Television Ltd.

Kent Gerecke replies: W.D. McGregor's denial of involvement in the Marathon proposal and his defence of big corporations is exactly what one would expect from a media executive. McGregor has confirmed that the media's major activity is the dissemination and reinforcement of the ideologies and values of the corporate world. Wallace Clements shows that (*The Canadian Corporate Elite*), the media:

...act as gatekeepers, performing the functions of selection and screening alternatives by establishing limits of tolerance. In this role they are not so much involved in changing ideologies as reinforcing existing ones. In this role, they are very much involved in exercising an important form of power. In the words

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The editors have a marxist and nationalist bias. However, since there is no party, there is no party line. Come and get it.

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of the Senate Committee on Mass Media: "The power of the press ... is the power of selection" and as it argues about the media owners: "They're not spectators. They control the presentation of the news, and therefore have a vast and perhaps disproportionate say in how our society defines itself."

What better example of this at work than McGregor's expression of opinion on development in Kitchener - Waterloo.

Dead or alive

I cannot understand Ron Clarke's concern about the reorganization within the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. (*City Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 3&4) Naturally, there are differing evaluations of the accomplishments of particular government departments depending on your point of view. But I thought in fact that everyone agreed that the shortest book on government policy in Canada was the book of the accomplishments of the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs.

Realistically, the problem with the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs has always been a structural one. In any government, when you have nothing to sell to other departments, nobody gives a damn what you have to say. The paraphrase of Acton which was first used to refer to Trudeau is most apt: "lack of power corrupts; absolute lack of power corrupts absolutely". The question isn't whether the MSUA is dead or not. It's whether it has ever really been alive.

Allan Moscovitch
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

The fight goes on

While Kreuger, in his letter "Bias Clear" (Vol.2, No.5), states that citizens' groups must make an input to the planning process at an early stage, he misses or ignores the obvious. For the citizens' group to make

an input, it must have access to information, it must know the details of the development plan, it must know when and where the city council plans to meet. Unfortunately, the councillors, planners, developers, and the media, who control access to this information often feel that they know what is best and refuse to give it out. Such appears to have been the case in the Kitchener Market fight.

Krueger, as a member of the Kitchener Planning Board, did not provide the citizens of Kitchener with the information on the Oxlea-Eaton redevelopment scheme before the decision was made to destroy the City Hall and Farmers Market. However, he now appears willing to offer the fatherly advice that, "you should have been here earlier." But maybe Krueger couldn't inform the citizens. Perhaps the eleventh hour had come and even he wasn't informed.

Frank Doe

Praising the NFB

Let me begin by stressing that I find your publication generally provides much valuable insight into the processes shaping the development of urban Canada. Such information allows the reader to examine these processes and their results from new, often exciting perspectives. I find your point of view refreshing, forthright, and well informed, and most of the time, I find myself in wholehearted agreement with you.

I must object, however, to the quality of some of the reviews that have appeared in your magazine. Joan Wolfrey's recent analysis of the NFB's Corporation Series, for example, has only served to increase my skepticism concerning the ability of some of your reviewers to place material within a proper context. To do otherwise is to avoid one of the duties of a responsible reviewer.

I have shown the film *Real Estate* to continuing education students in both Social Science and Geography at York University's Atkinson College during the past twelve months. On both occasions, the showings were highly successful. To be sure, *Real Estate* is not everything that we would like it to be. For one thing, it was made more than a decade ago (a

point conveniently omitted by Ms. Wolfrey). Nevertheless, the film is useful because it does provide living, breathing evidence, as only a film can, of the way in which developers operate. After all, how many of us will ever gain any access to the corporate boardrooms of this country? Obviously, *Real Estate* does not provide us with the insights into development of a Peter Spurr, but then one would be very hard-pressed to summarize his *Land and Urban Development* into a 29-minute film. Moreover, the end result might be quite boring. I would argue that *Real Estate* is a success because it has helped me to open the eyes of my students. After seeing it, they begin to understand how Canadian cities are increasingly conforming to the ideas of the conglomerates. Even more important, they begin to ask questions about the whole development process, questions that most of them have never raised before. In my humble opinion, Ms. Wolfrey has failed to grasp the crucial point that films are intended for absorption by groups of individuals, not solitary reviewers. Watching the film is only part of the exercise. Discussion of what has been seen is equally important. *Real Estate* neither answers nor asks all the right questions, but it most certainly can be used to generate discussion. It is precisely for this reason that I have found the film so useful. If a movie can motivate continuing education students, many of whom now come from business-oriented backgrounds, to consider urban development from new perspectives, then I think it has served the public very well. I only wish I had more films like *Real Estate*.

May I conclude by suggesting that you gently persuade future reviewers of this type of movie to screen the films in an appropriate context. Ms. Wolfrey has questioned the value of *Real Estate* without any evidence to indicate that she has gone to such lengths. I find this approach dishonest and completely out of character with the well-researched aura of the vast majority of the items in *City Magazine*.

Michael J. Doucet

CITY NEWS

MONTREAL

The amazing story of the Laurentien Hotel

In Montreal, demolition has become a way of life. Since the early fifties, new highways and office complexes, road arterialization and subways have combined with real estate speculation practices of block-busting and collection into parking lots to virtually destroy the major part of the Montreal core area. One gaping open area follows after another, asphalted and covered by cars during the day, they empty at night to leave cold, hostile, windswept areas. For some of these lots, a project is occasionally thought to be at hand, for the great majority of these blocks, their only useful purpose, beyond parking, is to serve as a safe place for someone's money, where it can rest and grow quietly, relatively free of expensive management of activity.

But the worst is yet to come. A project has been put in train that entails in a single demolition the quantity of homes demolished almost every year in the last four years.

TABLE 1
ROOM RATES IN MONTREAL HOTELS

| | Single | Double | No. of Rooms |
|----------------------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Berkley | \$24 | \$28 | 100 |
| Holiday Downtown | \$33 | \$43 | 500 |
| Holiday Place Dupuis | \$33 | \$43 | 400 |
| Ritz | \$47 | \$57 | 267 |
| Loews La Cite | \$32-48 | \$40-56 | 500 |
| Champlain | \$47-51 | \$57-61 | 614 |
| Queen Elizabeth | \$41-49 | \$51-59 | 1200 |
| Bonaventure | \$50 | \$60 | 395 |
| Royal Roussillon | \$31 | \$42 | 300 |
| Four Seasons | \$48-53 | \$60-65 | 320 |
| Sheraton | \$28-33 | \$35-38 | 1004 |
| Laurentien | \$19-22 | \$28 | 1000 |

Montreal's Laurentien Hotel is now closed and it will soon be demolished. It is no slum! It is a modern building built in 1948. It is fireproof. At 23 storeys, and 364,000 square feet, it is one of the city's largest hotels. It was renovated at a cost of \$2-3 million only just this year. Its color TV's, shag rugs, new furnishings, and re-decoration are amongst the nicest and newest in town. It contributed directly over two hundred permanent jobs to the economy of the city. It has 1000 rooms. The rates started at \$19.00 single and finished at \$26.00 double.

The Laurentien had a great tradition as the mainstay of Montreal's budget tourist industry. It was the cheapest, most comfortable, reputable hotel in a city which already has the highest hotel rates in Canada.* (See Table 3)

The Laurentien was also very profitable. It returned a recent rate of \$1.8 million annually in profit to its owner, Canadian Pacific. CPR purchased the hotel at a reported price of only \$8 million in 1969 from the Sheraton chain when I.T.T. sold

TABLE 2

THE LAURENTIEN HOTEL — SOME BARE FACTS

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Annual Revenue | \$5 million + |
| Annual profit | \$1.5 million + management fee |
| Employees | 200+ |
| Age (1976) | 28 years |
| Land coverage | 35,000 sq. ft. |
| Area of building | 364,000 gross sq. ft. + basements |
| No. of rooms | 1004 |

TABLE 3

CANADIAN HOTEL COSTS/ROOM MAY 1976

| | Cost | Rise in Year |
|-----------|---------|--------------|
| Montreal | \$31.94 | 11% |
| Toronto | \$29.24 | 3% |
| Vancouver | \$29.52 | 7% |
| Ottawa | \$28.76 | 10% |

Sheraton's hotels world-wide to raise cash for its conglomerate empire.

The replacement cost of the 1000 rooms in today's building market is at least \$30 million. Holiday Inn presently estimates that its new, 900-odd room, semi-luxury hotel on Dorchester Street will cost over \$50 million. And construction of this hotel is now stopped because its cost may have far outstripped its ability ever to pay back its investment. It stands abandoned like a project after a South American revolution, half finished. The Laurentien is mourned by tourists and by the people who

* From Lawenthal & Horvath, 1976.



The Laurentien Hotel.



The new Holiday Inn located just across Dorchester Street from the Laurentien, the construction of this hotel has been abandoned after \$30 million has been spent on its more than 900 rooms. Costs completed will be over \$50 million.

sell Montreal as a tourist and convention centre. Its disappearance puts the average cost of staying in central Montreal right out of sight. Bid conventions, those which go to cities on a low-bid basis, are sure to pass up Montreal for the foreseeable future. One person in the Convention and Visitors' Bureau estimated the loss to be at least ten such congresses per year. This will cause an appreciable drop of volume to downtown business that cannot be replaced elsewhere. Ironically, it will decrease business in the other higher-priced hotels of the city which are overbuilt at over 15,000 rooms, up from 5,000 rooms only a few years ago.

But besides all this, what makes the demolition of this profitable asset so incredible is that it stands on the fringe of eighteen vacant acres of the prime empty development land of Montreal's core. Its owners, Canadian Pacific, have been collecting land to the west of Montreal's Dominion Square ever since CP decided to locate its rail head in Windsor Station almost a hundred years ago, setting off the development boom which built Montreal's uptown. It is one of the largest private holdings of prime, open downtown land in Canada. In comparison, Place Ville-Marie occupies

seven acres. CP would have us believe that the less-than-one-acre of land which will be freed by the demolition of this hotel is vital to the success of its gigantic 18-acre development, which CP admits will take many years to develop.

In fact, CP may believe that the demolition is vital. One market analysis by a New York programming firm, Landauer & Associates, states, in part:

Dominion Square tends to act as a barrier between the CP site and the principal business district to the east (Place Ville Marie). Extreme planning care must be taken to minimize the barrier effect by making the (whole) development attractive to the east.

This would imply that CP is doing the community a favour by ridding them of an ugly building.

The Save Montreal Committee took issue with this comment of Landauer's saying:

In fact Dominion Square acts not as a barrier but as an attractant to your site from the east. And the knowledge that you will have another treed plaza within your project will attract at least as much activity as anything else which you might plan. Montreal squares, Dominion, Victoria, Philips, and Place d'Armes have always been the only real generators of economic activity that can be counted on in the long history of planning in Montreal. Windsor Station is also an attractant for you, not only out of architectural curiosity but also because it is a principal transportation node which tens of thousands use daily.

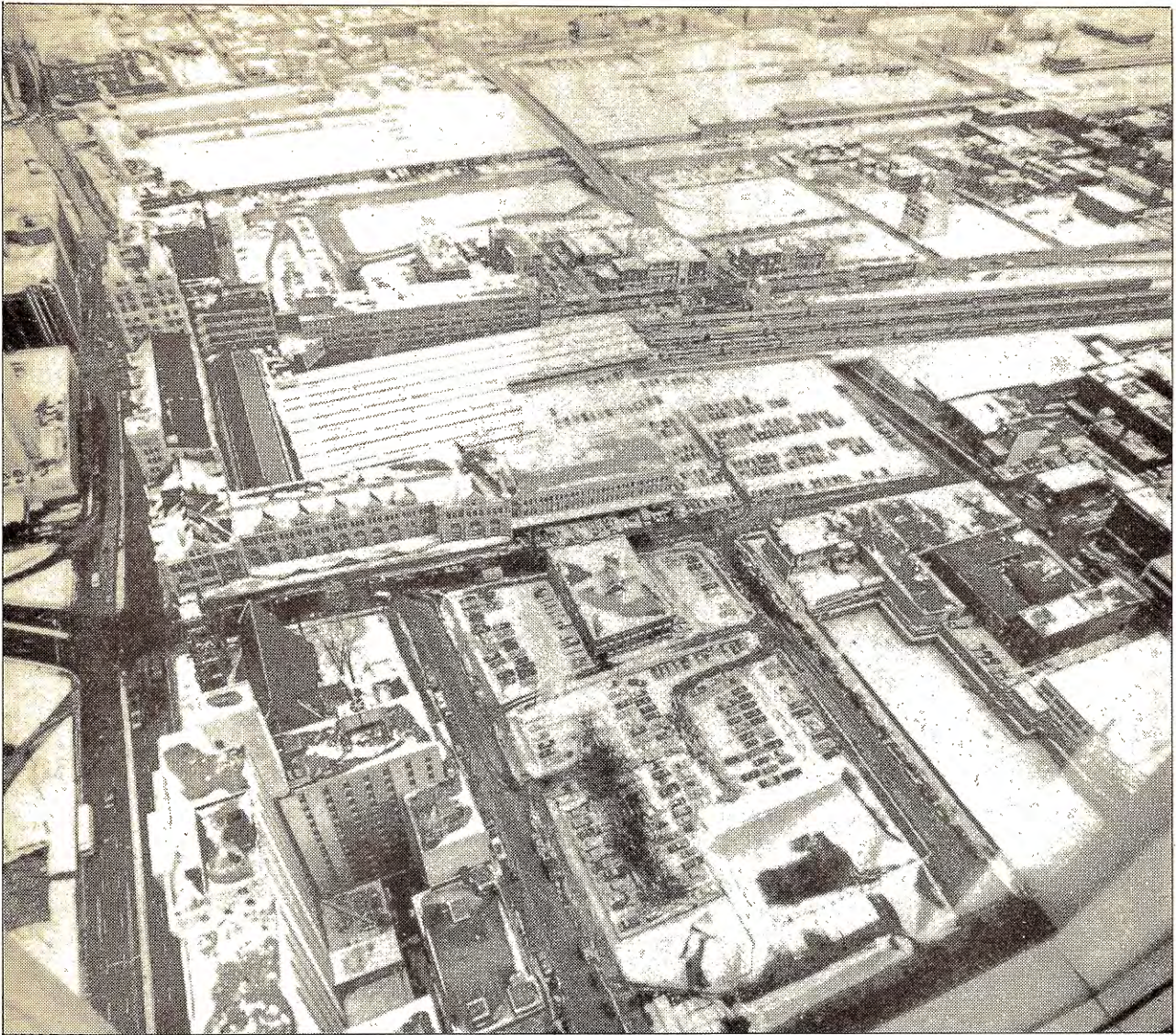
You have to "attract" very little to your project compared with other developers without that node of plazas. The Laurentien is, we assure you, no less beautiful than any other building with which you have been, or are likely to be, associated.

Its "looks" cannot be intelligently presented as an argument for its demolition in the face of its social use.

The Laurentien was almost the last of the great buildings built in Montreal on the basis of setbacks. This was a series of rules by which so many "wedding cake"-shaped big buildings were built. It was put up by people whose primary interests were speculative and it featured some of Montreal's first economy-minded modern detailing, introduced to Canada after the Second World War. It is an interesting building with very clean lines despite a fractured symmetry. However, it is held by armchair architectural critics to be "hopelessly dated", whatever that means, and "very ugly", whatever that means.

Canadian Pacific which hasn't done a "beautiful" building since Sir William Van Horne started working for CP, would have us believe that what it will put up will be so superior that we will forget the injury to the city. One wonders if CP will forget the injury to itself. A loss of \$1.5-million per year is hard to overlook.

Several groups have criticized the demolition. One of the original conservation groups of the city, the friends of Windsor Station, rounded up support from the Montreal Society of Architects to



Aerial view to south of C.P.R. property and empty land in the vicinity. Peel, Stanley, Drummond, Mountain Streets, from left to right; run north and south. Dorchester Street runs along bottom of photo. Laurentien is at lower left on less than one acre of land, with Dominion Square and the Chateau Champlain to the upper left. Windsor Station's covered track fan is slowly being covered by a parking lot. Including the land one block west of Mountain Street, C.P. owns 14 acres of empty land in this photo.

criticize the demolition of the hotel as early as December 1970; but these efforts were mainly directed over the next few years at preventing the demolition of Windsor Station, perhaps Canada's finest architectural ensemble and a historic building of the first rank. This fight has been successful. In late 1974, the Save Montreal Committee, a federation of 30 citizens groups, took over the fight to conserve the Laurentien.

This latter group may have been responsible, in 1974, for the withdrawal of support for the whole project by the Bank of Montreal and a reprieve for the hotel. Long-time financiers of CP, the Bank of Montreal had wanted to build its new head office on the site of the Laurentien, to benefit from the green public space of historic Dominion Square,

just across the street.

Save Montreal pointed out how unnecessary it was to destroy the hotel to create enough open land in the vicinity; as the committee said, in part, in a letter to Bank of Montreal president Hart on September 30, 1974:

We deplore the imminent destruction of the Laurentien Hotel to be replaced by a new head office for the Bank of Montreal, or even your negotiations with the CPR to this effect. Not for its historic or cultural significance does such demolition worry us – nor is it a neighbourhood containing a complex web of personal human relationships. But we do protest that no public purpose exists to justify the destruction of such a large, newly-built, fully-used modern asset. In a world where resources and energy are crisis-short, in a country ravaged by increasing costs and lessening



View of the downtown from the track fan of Windsor Station. From left to right — Holiday Inn, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Laurentien Hotel, Place Ville Marie.

productivity, in a city where student housing is unavailable, where old people and poor people live in disgraceful conditions, the warping of community investment priorities to justify destruction on this scale is nothing short of obscene — like the burning of food to force prices up.

This building is in scale with the largest buildings of the city. It functions profitably at high capacity. Similar quality accommodation is unavailable and irreplaceable at anywhere near this price downtown today.

Low income non-expense-account tourism and visiting is sure to be the worse off for its loss.

That such a plan could be conceived is proof of the existence of dominant corporations, unaccountable to market conditions in our community and acting outside of socially desirable goals acceptable to it.

We urge you to build on one of the city's many parking lots or highway air rights or to recycle one of the city's many older heritage buildings and invest this money in a socially productive enterprise pending passage of planning legislation to prevent such waste.

We intend to rule out no non-violent course of action in an attempt to get you to change your plans to conserve the

viable with the heritage buildings on the Windsor Station — Laurentien project site or to reverse your decision to consider locating there.

Copies of this letter were sent to large mortgage institutions which might finance the future project and to governments. At the same time a boycott of the Bank of Montreal was mentioned as a possibility and a day-long demonstration of 100 people was held to protest the demolition.

In December 1974, several days before the hotel was to close, the Bank of Montreal announced its withdrawal from the scheme and the hotel was saved — temporarily as it turned out.

Just as the Olympics closed down here, CP published a perspective of its new building plans for the site and a neighbouring block. Protests, demonstrations, and political pressure over the next three months have had no effect this time. However, there was more support for the anti-



The lobby of the Laurentien. A picture taken recently. Entire public areas of hotel were re-decorated this spring. New carpet on floor is blue and red. Illuminated ceiling is all new.

Photos by Esmond Choueki

demolition position. This time the Party Quebecois denounced CP; calling the demolition "revolting"; so did Harry Blank, Liberal Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Parliament and member for the riding in which the hotel is located. He used the words, "ludicrous and stupid". Montreal's city-hall opposition, the Montreal Citizen's Movement, joined their efforts to support the retention of the building. Pierre O. Courtemanche, director of the Centre d'Etudes de Tourisme, spent 15 prime time TV minutes denouncing the effect demolition would have on Montreal tourism. A demonstration was held, leaflets were passed out, letters were written to government and to newspapers, but to no avail.

This time around, many business-oriented individuals who had previously refused to support criticism of the hotel's demolition joined in the protest. They had become convinced the hotel was a positive asset that was being needlessly wasted.

Many neighbourhood and historical conservancy groups lent support to the 1976 effort to prevent the demolition.

Harry Blank pointed out that a convention centre, partly financed by the provincial government, was deliberately being located in close proximity to the hotel site, and that it was insupportable that the hotel would now disappear.

F.H. Knelman, professor of Science & Human Affairs at Concordia University, called the demolition "primitive" and "a mindless act of waste" and pointed out that Canada had the worst record of all OECD nations in conservation of energy despite many promises to reduce consumption. He pointed out that the noise and dust of destruction and reconstruction would exact a physical and environmental cost which CP would never be called upon to pay and urged that a way be found to charge these to CP.

The demolition is typical of many which have



Well, what about the workers?

Somewhere, squeezed by the conflicting pressures of big business, big government and big unions stand the workers. The workers have little voice in determining their own future. When Ottawa imposed wage and profit controls last year, the decision came without consultation. Afterwards, the CLC and others proposed a tripartite, corporatist structure of consultation among the giants of the economy. Writing in *The Canadian Forum*, Donald

Smiley, Jack McLeod, Kenneth McNaught, Larry Pratt, and Desmond Morton analysed and pointed to the dangers of corporatism for Canada. Once again *The Forum* led the way in political and economic analysis; and subsequently the political parties, business and the unions retreated from a corporatist solution to our economic disputes.

Obviously *The Forum* does not shy away from controversy

when controversy is necessary. And it approaches every subject with the same forthrightness, whether it is art, politics, education, films, or literature.

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blasted central Montreal since the early fifties. A building is promised at some time in the future, demolition takes place, then the site stays empty for years. CP promises that in "about five years" a speculative office building will be put on the site. This building is just a little higher than the present hotel though it will have more bulk — probably, owing to a transfer of air rights from the adjacent St. George's Church site. This may make the ultimately used land profitable, at least on paper; but what is far more likely, in the foreseeable future, is the adoption of rules of density which will subtract from present density regulations (FAR 12) to give common sense ratios which will prevent the more greedy developers like CP from profiting from their present over-density mistakes which take place at great public cost. As well, a near certainty is that new zoning regulations will require hotel and residential space to be included in all office projects in the core of the city. This means that a building very similar to the hotel will soon have to be built as part of the future CP project. Meantime, this steady \$1.8-million profit per year, going up all the time, is lost to the company and much more to the community. Amongst these losses are over a million dollars in direct income taxes on profit on the hotel and real estate taxes on the building to the city.

It is interesting to note that Mayor Drapeau and the vice-president of the Civic Executive Committee, Yvon Lamarre, both thought the building to be a real asset to the city because the building was "very beautiful." But both men felt that the "sacred" right of the private property owner "even to destroy" his property "must be maintained" or society could not continue to function in an "orderly" manner. Neither appeared to comprehend other arguments based on social or economic considerations.

Unfortunately, so many Montreal investors are only interested in investing in empty land in Montreal, that the city's downtown cannot long continue to function in any manner, because it is ceasing to be there.

Unlike other cities, Montreal's city fathers have no plans to institute major changes in planning regulations which would either protect collective rights to participate in the city design processes or protect the more fragile assets of the city. The worst feature of civic life in Montreal is the lack of regular forums which are open to citizens to be heard on development questions. Like all other city business projects, permits and planning regulation changes are sprung upon the public from behind closed doors, by which time it is "too late" to effect change.

The city executive keeps steadfast to its protection of individual property rights to plan and build without having to lay projects open to other people who presumably have no rights, even to criticize, until it really is too late.

CP has stayed absolutely mum during the whole process. It seems determined not to defend its action publicly, probably because when CP tried to defend the demolition of Windsor Station a few years ago it opened the door to increased criticism and attention which became, finally, too embarrassing.

An interesting sidelight is the complete hand-wash done by federal government officials. The demolition is outrageously inflationary. But because no prices are being raised, and firing workers is not covered in anti-inflation legislation, federal law does not apply. Local federal MP's have entirely ignored the matter, saying that it is a provincial affair.

One spin-off benefit to CP which is little referred to and is little understood by the public is the enormous amount of economic advantage that needless obsolescence and reconstruction will generate within the CP empire itself at the expense of the rest of the community. Increased jobs and sales within CP all the way through its integrated real estate, transportation, manufacturing, and raw materials corporate structure will return profits and power eventually, even if the real estate part of the operation doesn't add up. This is a classic case of maximizing its own economic activity at the expense of other projects which the economy would otherwise bear to the profit of others or to the benefit of the whole community.

It is probable that the early new year will see this building come down. We are too realistic to think that another delaying action can be fought with any real chance of success. But the spectacle of a 22-storey building evaporating is not one that Montreal, or indeed Canadians, are likely to forget — ever.

It is known that other cities have been similarly treated by Canadian Pacific. Perhaps a collection of all its similar sins throughout the country would prove that the rules of development in Canada must be changed to prevent powerful members of society from abusing the urban environment so badly.

Michael Fish

WINNIPEG

Public corporation probable scapegoat

The province of Manitoba has appointed a one-man commission to inquire into land and housing costs in and around Winnipeg. Professor Ruben

Bellan, of the Economics Department, University of Manitoba, has accepted the commission responsibility. Terms of reference call for investigation into the causes of appreciation of urban land values, and, according to Professor Bellan, "all factors relevant" will be studied. Appointed under the Manitoba Evidence Act, Professor Bellan has power to subpoena persons and records and to take evidence under oath. A series of incidents led to this inquiry (see *City Magazine*, Vol.2, No.5).

Prior to the land probe beginning, a scapegoat has already been found. Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC), a public corporation of the provincial government involved in public housing and land assembly for housing, has been singled out by the media as the culprit. MHRC apparently has had some irregularities in its tender proposal procedures for low-cost housing, and there is an alleged two sets of books over the cost of lands purchased. While there may be plenty of cause to inquire into the operations of MHRC, such a focus diverts attention from the four big developers whose land banks have Winnipeg surrounded. BACM, Ladco, Qualico, and Metropolitan homes now control well over 7,000 acres of land on Winnipeg's periphery — enough land for the next 10 to 15 years.

Professor Bellan has said that MHRC will be included in his inquiry. It is now obvious that the media and organized developers will try to convince the commissioner that a public corporation has mismanaged its land. If such a transfer of blame comes about, this will be another wasted commission.

Kent Gerecke

WINNIPEG

Residents' group divided

Recent developments in Winnipeg's Fort Rouge Residents' Advisory Group illustrate some of the difficulties of community politics when a community is split between opposing groups on the fundamental matter of land development policy.

The area in question is in the southern half of the city. Fort Rouge is a very mixed area in terms of income levels, occupations of the residents, and housing. This diversity, however, has been a source of weakness as well as strength. Because of much petty in-fighting and segmentation, Fort Rouge residents have been unable to present a

united front when dealing with the pressures imposed on them — whether these pressures are internal, such as high density, or external, such as developers, traffic going through the area to the downtown core, people wishing to open businesses in the area, or the expansion of other neighbourhoods such as Fort Garry and Assiniboine Park.

A few years ago, the media tended to give the impression that Fort Rouge politics had been over-run by young radicals. If anything, the pendulum has swung the other way during the first eight months of this year. Now there is a split between those members of the community who favour planning and an attempt to find a middle ground between growth and the quality of life, and those who feel that one has the right to dispose of one's property as one wishes, even if that includes selling out to the developers. The latter appear to be winning.

However, this division of opinion is itself the result of several more fundamental conflicts. In very simplified form they are the following:

1. A division between older and younger residents. In the early seventies, students and young professionals in Fort Rouge became involved in such projects as the East of Osborne District Planning Process. This involved more than 80 people in research and sending out questionnaires to residents, and was aided by the city Environmental Planning Department. The results of this research were embodied in a draft bylaw which would have provided a plan for the East of Osborne area, including such aspects as rehabilitation of housing, height and density limitations. Although not everyone involved in the planning process was "young", the popular image was that of young radicals. There was a reaction against young people planning for "older" residents. When public hearings were first held, the RAG, dominated by the "anti-planning" group, was the first to speak out against it.

2. A division between new and long-time residents. In the nineteen forties and fifties Fort Rouge was one of the most chic and desirable of Winnipeg's neighbourhoods. As some of the stately old houses fell into disrepair and neglect, as highrises went up and the population changed to include a much broader cross-section, many former residents felt that it was no use fighting to preserve a community that they felt was past its prime. New residents, however, found much to their liking in the area, and were ready to work hard to preserve it.

3. A class division. One gets the impression that many of the Fort Rouge residents who are trying to rise economically, or who are retired on fixed incomes, often with money tied up in a house, find the temptation to sell out their properties irresistible. Those who are leading the fight against neighbourhood decay and demolition are often residents

who are already economically secure. Thus, the cause of neighbourhood improvement and rehabilitation becomes linked, however indirectly, to the maintenance of a status position.

In these ways, the community was segmented. And, according to Joanne Griesman and others, a group of "misinformed" property owners "froze out" the more progressive element, particularly in the first eight months of 1976. As a result, the RAG was being used, until this October, as a forum for the "anti-planning" groups (read "pro-development residents") who were able to scuttle progressive planning projects and to support applications for new highrises without regard to their impact. As ex-Chairman David Walker puts it: "When Council for June Westbury turns to look for recommendations from the RAG, she finds out that it's completely different from what she would expect to find in her ward. She just looks at me and I say, 'well, that's what the people who showed up said'."

A Fort Rouge Community Forum was organized this September by Lloyd Axworthy, Fort Rouge MLA. While this was most likely an attempt to drum up support in anticipation of a 1977 provincial election, it also served as a kind of pep-talk. The result was a larger and more diverse crowd at the next RAG-sponsored Community Conference (held on the rather innocuous topic of community schools). Indications were that more people concerned with planning and overall policy volunteered time on committees, and, in addition, more young people were present than there have been for quite a while.

How long this will last is another matter. It may well be merely the last gasp of citizen participation, rather than a resurgence. For the sake of preserving a unique community — and for the sake of future urban reform in Winnipeg — I hope it is the latter.

Harold Rennie

SASKATOON

Andy Campbell: A tribute

Canada's planning fraternity was shocked and saddened to hear of the October 14, 1976 death of Andrew M. Campbell of Saskatoon. Andy, who was educated in both engineering and planning, was the former Director of Community Planning for the Province of Saskatchewan from 1965-1970. In 1970 he opened his own consulting practice in

Saskatoon.

A leader in the planning field, Andy worked exhaustively on behalf of planning and the planning profession in Canada. He was elected president of the Town Planning Institute of Canada in 1973.

Andy was also a great inspiration to people interested in entering the field of planning. He gave unselfishly of his time to assist and guide the young, inexperienced planner. Aside from his genuine expertise, Andy had that special talent that allowed him to easily bridge the gap between the conceptual and the pragmatic. Nor would Andy back away from a good debate on planning theory, professionalism, or any other related issue.

For those of us who knew him well and owe whatever we have to contribute to planning to his early influences, there is little more that can be said. Andy gave so much. I only hope some of his contributions will be reflected in the future improvement of our society.

Ron Clark

Advertise in City Magazine

City Magazine is the only medium for communicating with people across Canada who are interested in city planning, architecture, politics and urban studies.

It's an ideal vehicle for advertising job vacancies, announcing courses, promoting books or other publications, and for generally getting information out to people who share an interest in what's happening to Canadian cities.



Urban prospects: This old streetcar stands in a farm field fifteen miles north of Winnipeg. Its only use is as a guide-post to the Oak Hammock Wildfowl Sanctuary (far background). In 1892 streetcars were first introduced in Winnipeg and in 1951 they were discontinued in the name of progress. Now, with the energy crisis and an obvious need for improved public transit, the streetcar may become fashionable again. Can this vehicle be successfully rehabilitated?

CITY DIARY

Have you ever known anyone who regretted owning real estate?

That's the opening line in a hucksterish promotional mailing by an organization called the Canadian Property Managers Association, received recently by your faithful gossip columnist.

Immediately I thought of Bruce McLaughlin, the long-suffering developer-owner of the Montreal Holiday Inn, budgeted at \$25-million and scheduled for completion before the Olympic Games. The building is still unfinished, costs have soared far over the limit, and the Canadian Holiday Inns organization is downgrading their involvement. Bruce must surely regret the whole venture.

Then I thought of Maclean-Hunter Ltd., one of whose subsidiaries owns a five-storey warehouse in downtown Toronto whose appraised value plummeted by more than \$1-million when the new Toronto downtown plan was adopted by the city. Maclean-Hunter must seriously regret that it still owns that building.

And what about all those residential house-builders in Halifax, Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and many points in between, who have literally thousands of high-priced unsold housing units on their hands?

My answer to this skill-testing question, in other words, was the more I thought about it, the more regretful examples I could think of.

Presumably the suckers are expected to come up with another answer, and send in \$5 for "membership in the Canadian Property Managers Association" and the privilege of paying \$15 per month for the next ten months for the correspondence course "How to Make Money in Real Estate."

As a Free Bonus Extra, they will get an "eight-digit deluxe calculator with full memory at no extra cost."

With that device, the future Bruce McLaughlins of Canada will be able to work out that the total cost of their learn-by-mail education is \$155. No wonder the association can afford to sell the course as if it were Encyclopaedia Britannica. That full price is, regrettably, not mentioned anywhere in the literature.

What is mentioned is that the full cost of the course can be written off as a tax-deductible expense. That "may reduce your cost by as much as 50 per cent!"

Given the present declining state of the real estate market in Canada, saving tax money on that

"Buy land... they're not making any more of it."

Have you ever known anyone
who regretted owning real estate?



Now, you too can learn

How to Make Money in Real Estate

with this 20 lesson home-study course
prepared by the

\$155 will be the first and last taste most would-be speculators will get of the thrills of real estate.

What is a supposedly professional association like the "Canadian Property Managers Association" up to with a scheme like this?

Another professional association, the Ontario Association of Architects, has been involved in some pretty peculiar practices.

The OAA hired two private detectives in 1974 to lure a Timmins professional engineer into offering to design an apartment building for them.

Once they'd succeeded, the engineer was hauled into court by OAA executive director Brian Parks and charged with holding himself out as an architect.

In October, the Ontario Divisional Court acquitted the engineer, and in the process opened up the door for far greater involvement by engineers in areas until now thought to be restricted by Ontario statute to architects only.

Instead of reinforcing the OAA's monopoly on architecture as planned, the test case weakened it. Where does that leave the architects on the OAA's executive who thought up this strategy in the first place?

A new organization called Access, "A Canadian Committee for the right to public information," has been set up in Ottawa. With its honorary

chairman Gerald Baldwin MP the group is organizing the lobby for a freedom of information act from the federal government.

You can join for \$5, and get a newsletter from the group. The address is Access, P.O. Box 855, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5P9.

Another recent appeal for money came from Michael Burns, the editor of *Urban Forum/Colloque urbain*, published by the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research.

Mr. Burns described his magazine as "Canada's only frequent, bilingual vehicle for the balanced publication of all matters relevant to urban Canada."

Just where does that leave the magazine you've got in your hands right now?

Frequent we are, by the low standards that apply to these magazines (though not by the standards of *City Magazine's* own editors who'd like to be more organized on that point).

Bilingual we're not.

And are we balanced, or — and here's where I wonder what Mr. Burns is getting at — the opposite, i.e. unbalanced?

Since he raised the question, perhaps we should anticipate Mr. Burns's reply.

Who says that the federal government is and always has been in a very cosy relationship with the land development and construction industry?

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, that's who.

Jean-Robert Gauthier, MP, told the Seneca College Real Estate Conference in November: "The federal government has had a good relationship with all segments of the housing industry over the last 30 years or so."

For whose benefit? You may think for the benefit of people like William Teron, Bruce McLaughlin, Cadillac-Fairview and the other lucky developers who have made hundreds of millions of dollars in profits generated by the high prices they have achieved in selling urban land to home buyers. But you would be wrong.

"It's a good arrangement," said Mr. Gauthier about industry-government closeness, "and the best part of it is that the Canadian people are the direct beneficiaries."

We, not the developers, are the winners.

Keep that in mind next time you're reading about the profits of \$15,000 and \$20,000 built into the price of \$60,000 homes in the suburbs that no one can afford to buy any more.

After months of puzzled silence, the public relations experts at the real estate industry's organizations have figured out how to respond to criticism of the industry's suburban land development operations.

The answer: a veiled threat of a strike by the developers.

The tactic: announce that the big firms are pulling up stakes and going south to the U.S. with their money.

Kicking off the campaign was a straight-faced, front-page headline story in the *Toronto Star* announcing that major developers were leaving Canada for the U.S.

The piece was pure industry propaganda, offering no alternative analysis from anyone outside the industry.

It's true that the larger corporate land developers have been getting involved in the U.S. housing market. This has been going on for a number of years. Cadillac-Fairview's attempt to buy a slice of California in the form of the Irvine Ranch is only one in a series of moves.

What's the big attraction of the U.S. market? There are several, but the most important one right now is that it offers an opportunity to turn over capital invested.

There's little attraction for big developers to increase the money they're putting into suburban land development in Canada right now because the market has turned sour. The big developers have substantial inventories of housing units that won't sell.

The reason they won't sell, of course, is that their price tags are far beyond the reach of families who would very much like to own a home in the suburbs but who can't pay \$55,000 or \$60,000 or \$70,000 for a three-bedroom bungalow. The developers could cut these prices dramatically, by \$15,000 to \$20,000, and still make a reasonable \$3,000 or \$4,000 profit per unit.

But price-cutting is the absolutely last-ditch measure of a successful oligopoly.

In the U.S., however, these firms will develop land and build houses and happily take a profit of \$3,000 or \$4,000. They can't make more because U.S. house price levels are so much lower than in Canada.

The question to ask the foreign-investing corporations is: why don't you accept the same overall profit figure in Canada that you will in the States?

And why not recognize that the biggest single reason the housing market is so slow in Canada is your high land profits and your high house lot prices?

Thomas Adams

The Suburbs

John Sewell

Canadian cities are now ringed by suburbs. Curved streets, wide lots, houses that are usually one-storey or one-and-a-half storey in size, at least one car in every house: this is the pattern which has been followed in the growth of urban Canada since 1945.

Hard as it is to imagine, the suburbs have not always been with us. Before 1939, in fact, the form taken by urban growth was quite different: straight streets in a rectangular grid pattern, narrow lots, two-storey houses, and public transportation the dominant way of getting around the city for most people.

As the physical form of new housing and communities has changed radically since 1945, so has the structure of the real estate and house-building indus-

try. An industry characterized by many small-scale independent entrepreneurs, none with the ability individually to have any effect on the overall housing market, has been transformed into an industry of a few enormous and highly-profitable corporations whose collective actions have enormous impact on growth patterns and price levels.

In this special issue on the suburbs, John Sewell records where the suburbs came from, analyzes the first large-scale corporate development in the suburbs, E.P. Taylor's Don Mills, reviews the problems which have come along with suburbia, and proposes new approaches to urban growth for Canada's cities.

Where the suburbs came from

In some respects, the Second World War was a starting point for Canada. During the latter part of the war, the Canadian government recognized the major changes that were occurring in the economy, and set up committees to recommend new Canadian economic structures and policies. Major shifts would be required to ensure that those returning from the war should have places to live and places to work. Canada was expected to experience a period of strong growth, for which the economy had to prepare itself.

HOUSING IN POST-WAR CANADA

The need for housing appeared to be very great. Reformers were saying that Canada had an obligation to end the cycle of poor housing which led to social problems. This housing had to be replaced. Also the supply of housing units had to increase to accommodate the projected increase in population and new family formation. The Federal Government took early steps in 1944 with a National Housing Act, whose full title was, interestingly enough:

An Act to promote the construction of new houses and the repair and maintenance of existing houses, and improvement of housing and living standards and the expansion of employment in the post-war period.

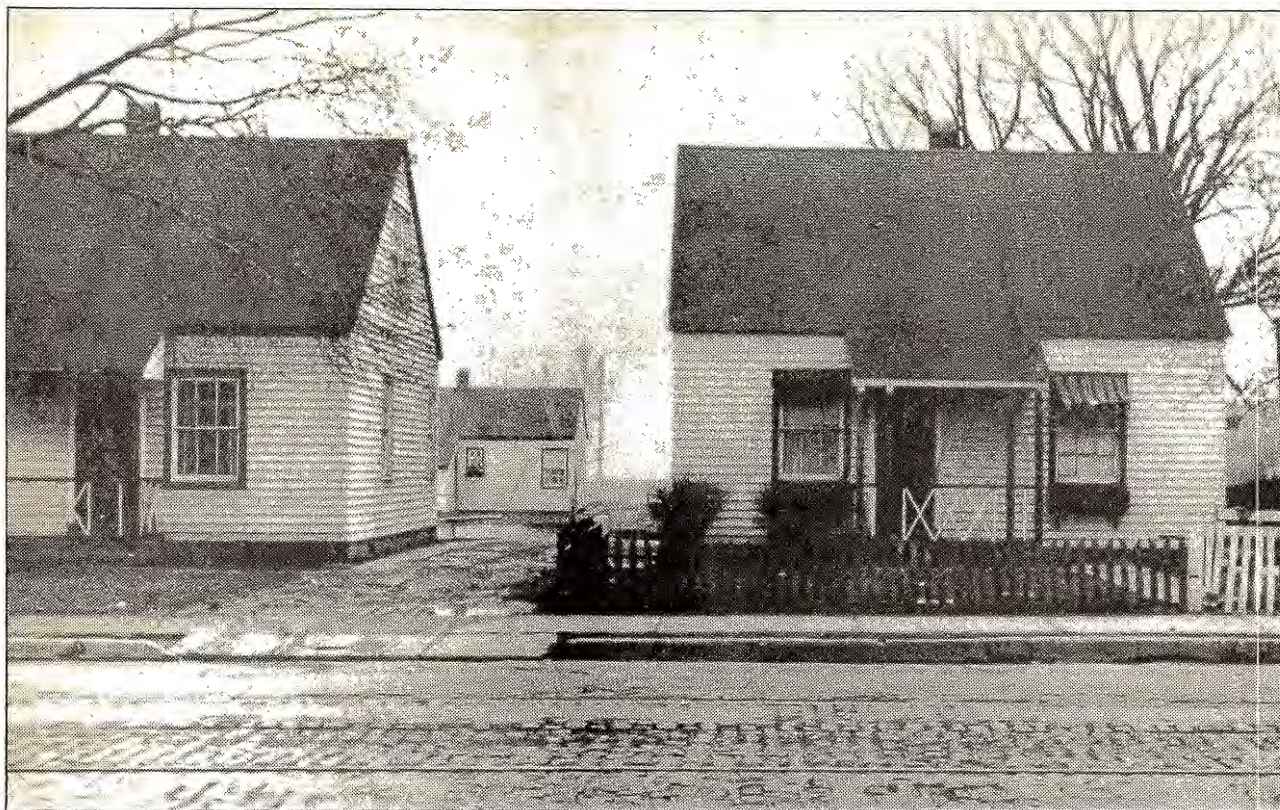
The two problems of housing and employment were seen as inseparable.

In its report *Housing and Community Planning*, published in 1944, the government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction calculated that at least 730,000 housing units would be required in the decade commencing in 1946. But even this number of units was considered an underestimate, since it did not take account of the "doubling-up" that the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply noted in 1946. His opinion then was that some 480,000 units were required in the next five years. Given that only 260,000 housing units had been built in the ten years prior to the war, it was clear that significant changes would have to occur to meet housing needs as forecast.¹

Some of these new units were provided by War-time Housing Limited, a government-controlled corporation providing housing units for rent, a market private companies refused to serve. The record of this company was impressive, completing almost 8,000 rental units in 1946, and 5,000 in 1947.

But most of the housing was not to be produced by government. The Right Hon. C.D. Howe usually concluded his strong statements about housing needs by emphasizing how that need would be met: It is the policy to ensure that as large a portion as possible of housing be built by private initiative.²

Liberal Government policy was to leave housing to private industry. When industry wouldn't supply the appropriate number or types of unit, then the job of government was seen to be to provide help to the industry: improved financing; help



Rental housing units erected in 1946 by the Wartime Housing Ltd. on Queen St. E. in Toronto. Photo: City of Toronto Archives

with labour and materials; setting targets; and all of the other tools set out in the National Housing Act. Wartime Housing Limited was summarily disbanded by C.D. Howe to give the industry free scope.

Studies were produced which analyzed the cost of the massive housing program. In order to help ensure that private initiative would provide adequate financing (in the form of profit-making investments) the Insurance Act was amended to allow insurance companies to finance land improvements in suburban areas. This, of course, allowed much more capital to flow into housing.³

In Ontario, the Planning Act passed in 1946 had the primary effect of regulating the subdivision of land through ministerial approval. While it appears that Planning Act provisions controlling subdivisions might have been a method of government control over the development of land, in fact Ontario was simply bringing the order and stability necessary for substantial investment to a market that was about to explode.

The perceived view of governments and their housing experts in the nineteen forties was that production of new housing by private enterprise was not only desirable, but also necessary for the health of the country. Post-war optimism placed a great deal of faith in the growth and ability of industry to supply housing for the needs of Canada. And governments geared themselves up

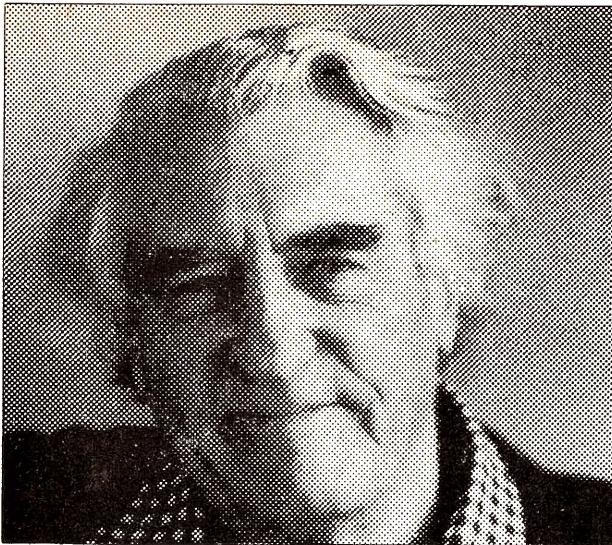
to help the property industry meet that public need.

HOUSING THAT PEOPLE COULD AFFORD

Soon after the war, the price of building materials jumped rapidly — 38 per cent from 1946 to 1947 alone.⁴ Of course, housing costs also began to climb and there was consternation that real housing needs would not be met. One point rapidly became clear: that private developers would not be able to provide housing for those who most needed it. It was the old problem of discovering that the economy did not work for low-income people.

In 1951 Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation published a study entitled *Post-War House Building in Canada* which addressed itself to cost and supply problems. It offered a reassuring, if rather difficult-to-believe, explanation of how this could work to the benefit of all:

In the past new houses have been built mainly for the medium- and upper-income groups in the community. Although some lower-income families may acquire new houses of a modest type, the numbers that do so are not in proportion to the numbers of families at this income level in the whole community. The lower-income groups depend largely on used housing, which is less expensive than new



Humphrey Carver, author of the influential book *"Houses for Canadians"*, written in 1948. Photo: Courtesy U. of T. Press

housing. As the pressure of demand for used housing from the lower-income groups increases, the price of residential real estate rises and effects a situation in which members of the medium- and upper-income classes are more apt to build new houses, thus vacating dwellings for successive groups lower down on the income scale. The process by which these groups obtained houses from wealthier members of the community is known as "filtering down."

...There is sufficient evidence to show that the average capital outlay required to obtain a new house is beyond the financial means of many Canadian families.⁵

The study did note that this filtering-down process would not be entirely effective in providing housing for those in the lower-income groups. While government policy under the National Housing Act had been successful in providing housing starts at an unprecedented rate, needs were still not met. For instance, between 1945 and 1950, some 460,000 housing units were built. But there was still a serious housing shortage, and almost half a million families were sharing residences.

The CMHC booklet attempted to analyze the cost components of new housing in order to find out what could be done to reduce housing costs. The study dealt with the cost of labour, the cost of building materials, the cost of money, and developers' profits. The root problem was said to be construction costs. "The fact with the most obvious effect on total costs is the type of structure"⁶ concluded the report.

Two conclusions emerged:

On the supply side there does not appear to be any better way of solving the problem of housing than by reducing construction costs by a change in building techniques. But even with a continuation of traditional building techniques some reductions in house building costs should be within reach of the industry as material supplies become plentiful, trained building tradesmen are available in sufficient numbers, and management uses all its ability to reduce costs even if strong markets reduce competition to a minimum.

On the demand side, until a genuine reduction in construction costs is achieved, willingness of families to spend more on housing than they are doing at present would mean more and better housing to be built for many years to come. In this connection, government assistance either in the form of loans and guarantees to families in a position to purchase homes or in the form of capital and rental subsidies along the lines provided in Section 35 of the National Housing Act, 1944, would go a long way to assuring a measure of stability in the house building industry—provided, of course, that such a state of affairs is reconcilable with other demands made on the economy. For example, in a period of rearmament, the proportion of resources going into housing will of necessity depend on the size of defence and defence-supporting programs considered essential for national security.⁷

There are three points to note in this conclusion. First, the problem is seen as a reduction in construction costs as opposed, say, to the reduction in land costs or developers' profits; second, the problem is getting money into the hands of those wishing to buy houses so that demand can be increased, which presumably would be followed by an increase in supply; and third, housing is a sector of the economy that can act as a valve for other fiscal concerns. Interestingly enough, the very same solutions to the very same problems are still being offered.

Perhaps more important was Humphrey Carver's book *Houses for Canadians*, published in 1948. While this book mainly addresses housing problems in the Toronto area, it had seminal influence on both private industry and government in regard to housing policy. Carver again pinpoints the need to reduce housing construction costs. In his mind, the basic cause of high housing costs is one of small builders carrying bits and pieces of materials out to the building site. Carver argues for a rationalized building industry based on large-scale house construction companies:

The small speculative builder undertakes the erection of only a few houses at a time, saving the cost of managerial overhead and office space and protecting himself from market uncertainties by keeping his output in line with the immediate demand of prospective purchasers. Under such circumstances it has been impossible to smooth the process of production. Fundamental changes in the process can only be brought about through the entry of large-scale producers into the housing industry, and they could only enter upon such a business if they could anticipate a continuing market which would justify the necessary capitalization. Since the expectation of such market conditions has never yet seemed justified, the organization of the residential building industry has stagnated.⁸

Bigness, he states, will help ensure cost reductions — big companies, and big projects:

It is only when large-scale projects are planned that there are opportunities to introduce important features of industrial organization aimed to reduce the high labour costs in the building process.⁹

Two of his six conclusions are prophetic for the housing industry in Canada:

Building projects carried out on a larger scale than is at present customary would provide an opportunity for less stereotyped design and more imaginative planning; this in itself would be likely to stimulate demand for housing.¹⁰

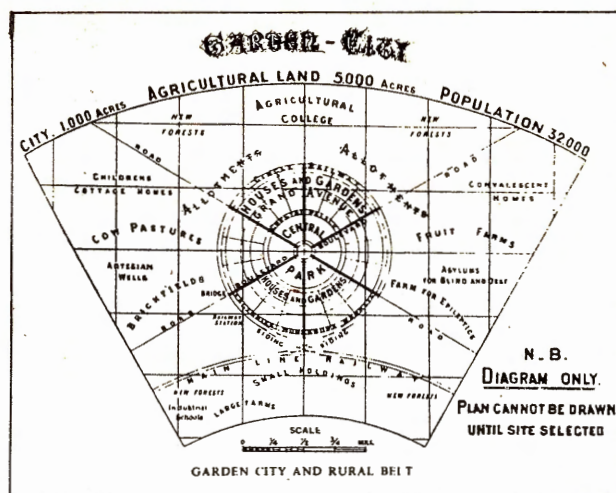
Gross Monthly Cost of a \$7,000 Housing Unit¹¹

| | | Monthly Payment | Per Cent |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------|
| a) Building | | | |
| Cost of Construction | \$6,225 | \$22.94 | 39 |
| b) Land | | | |
| Cost of Improved Lot | \$775 | 3.23 | 6 |
| c) Money | | | |
| \$2,000 Cash at 3% | | | |
| \$5,000 N.H.A. Loan at 4½ % | | 15.68 | 27 |
| d) Maintenance | | | |
| At \$80 Per Annum | | 6.66 | 11 |
| e) Taxes | | | |
| At 2 % of \$7,000 | | 11.66 | 17 |
| | | \$60.17 | 100 |

Given that the cost of land accounted for such a small part of the monthly payment, there was little reason for governments to assume that any energy should be directed to either the supply of land or its cost. If Carver's analysis was correct, housing costs would fall only if demand were stronger, leading to the creation of larger companies building larger developments so that techniques like prefabrication could be used.

THE SUBURBAN IDEA

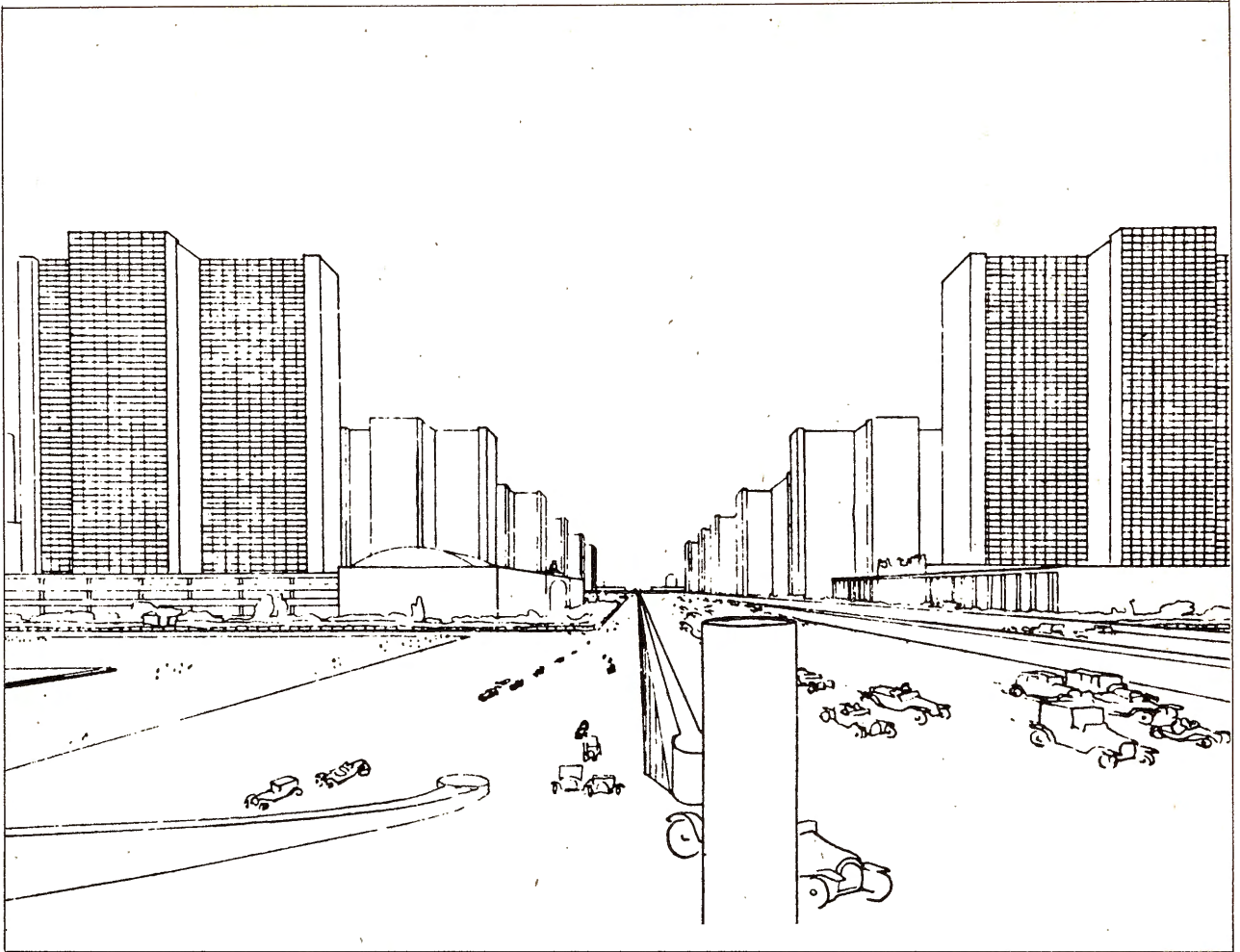
Ebenezer Howard developed his Garden City plan in 1898. Howard attempted to meld the best of the urban and rural environments in a small town of 25,000 people. Le Corbusier's Radiant City scheme proposed a highrise city of a million or



more person in the countryside. To emphasize his vision of the urban environment, Le Corbusier designed his towers on stilts so the landscape could roll under the building and on into the distance. In his Broadacre City scheme, Frank Lloyd Wright tried to join the urban and the rural by sprinkling houses throughout the countryside, with every man, woman and child getting an acre of land. •

In the United States, from the early nineteen twenties onwards, planners tackled the problem of trying to turn these urban concepts into reality. Perhaps the most influential was Sunnyside Gardens, built in the mid-nineteen twenties in New York. While Sunnyside Gardens was small by today's standards — less than 60 acres — it introduced the idea of houses set away from the street in a fashion that emphasized the project's garden aspect. It was followed by Radburn, a site of almost two square miles, which was much more ambitious in its attempt to build a garden city. With the onslaught of the depression, the idea was abandoned after a fifth of it has been built. These concepts were followed by green-belt towns, as their names indicate: Chatham Village, Hillside Houses, Greenbelt, Greenbrook, Greendale, Greenhills, Baldwin Hills.

Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, the American



Le Corbusier's unsolicited schemes for Radiant City. Illustration: *Radiant City* by Le Corbusier Orion Press N.Y.C. 1964

planners involved with Sunnyside and later Radburn, had two ideas about what they were trying to do. First, the evils of tenements and poor housing had to be overcome. That was to be done by the infusion of green space around houses, or alternatively, the scattered placement of houses in a green setting. Second, was the idea of developing whole new communities, that is, putting the houses and other uses into self-contained community units, not as an extension of existing urban forms. As the Second World War drew to a close, planners again turned to these concepts.

These ideas were first proposed in Canada by the influential Ontario planner E.G. Faludi. Faludi had learned town planning in Italy, where a number of new communities had been attempted. In 1945 he designed Thorncrest Village, a housing development of a 100 acres of land on the then outskirts of Toronto. This development had 180 housing units on 100 acres. Faludi blended two elements: low density housing with much green space; and commercial uses alongside housing in the plan. The result bore some resemblance to a town, a place with some measure of economic self-sufficiency.

The greenbelt concept was followed in a number of other subdivisions in Toronto, all of which are summarized in an October 1952 publication of the Toronto Real Estate Board.¹² Faludi edited this booklet. This publication illustrated the new kind of housing which the real estate industry had to market: houses that were single storey (or perhaps one-and-a-half storey), broadside to the street, set on spacious lots, using strong design elements. These ideas were at considerable variance with the match-box bungalows and their mutual drives set row after row on the street line. The large lot was, however, functional: sewer services were not available, and a half-acre lot was necessary to support the septic tank system. But the house design was a matter of principle. Faludi wished to design a house that was set in accordance with topography (rather than lot lines), and at the same time make maximum use of natural light through windows. Combining these ideas with the least expensive building methods (one storey if possible) produced a new house style.

Faludi also introduced building controls. The hundred acre site was owned by one company,

which sold its lots to selected individuals who arranged for their own builders. The company reserved the right to approve house designs and materials used.

Faludi's ideas were innovative, and not repeated immediately. At first these subdivisions served only high-income house purchasers.

The germ of "community planning" as a new approach to housing subdivisions was elaborated on by Humphrey Carver. In his influential 1948 book, *Houses for Canadians*, he outlined what he considered to be the problem of simply building houses, and laid out the direction that Canadian planning thinking has since adopted in rote-like fashion.

Carver thought that any house-building program was inseparable from community planning, not because one was trying to achieve something new, but because the planning process imposed an order to the building process.

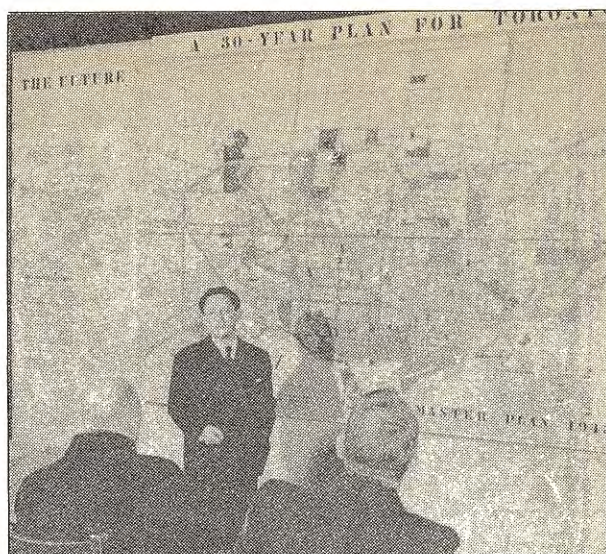
*In planning the construction of new communities it is necessary not only to lay out the sites but also to determine the sequence of operations. In this sense community planning is similar to the planning of any other kind of industrial process; it may be compared with the designing of the process by which the component parts of automobiles are delivered to the assembly line in a rational sequence so that the finished products can be brought to completion as economically and rapidly as possible...*¹³

Carver set out how he thought communities should be planned. He noted that in Toronto city planners viewed the city as a collection of neighbourhoods. And with the neighbourhood as a base, all the component land uses fell into place. In a remarkable two pages, Carver laid out an approach to suburban planning that planners have followed ever since:

... The Planning Board was able to identify seventy-eight neighbourhoods within the city boundaries, varying in size from 150 to 330 acres with an average of about 250 acres. In the older parts of the city there were found to be from 60 to 100 persons per acre – or a population of about 20,000 in a 250 acre neighbourhood. In that more modern part of the city which lies north of the Canadian Pacific Railway North Toronto line there were found to be from 30 to 60 persons per acre – or a population of 7,500 to 15,000 in a 250 acre neighbourhood.

If the density of a development in North Toronto, the most modern section of the city, may be regarded as a reasonable standard, then we may aim to achieve a similar standard in the development of the present housing program. To produce 50,000 houses may therefore be regarded as a community planning program for the creation of about twenty-five neighbourhood communities, each containing a population of about 7,500 people living in about 2,000 housing units (3.75 persons per household). Since, however, a considerable proportion of the program will be absorbed by the filling out of existing incomplete neighbourhood areas it would perhaps be safe to state that twenty (and not twenty-five) new neighbourhood units are required.

A good deal of study of community organization has in recent years been directed towards determining the most desirable size of an operating residential unit or neighbourhood. About 2,000 households appear to provide a well-balanced

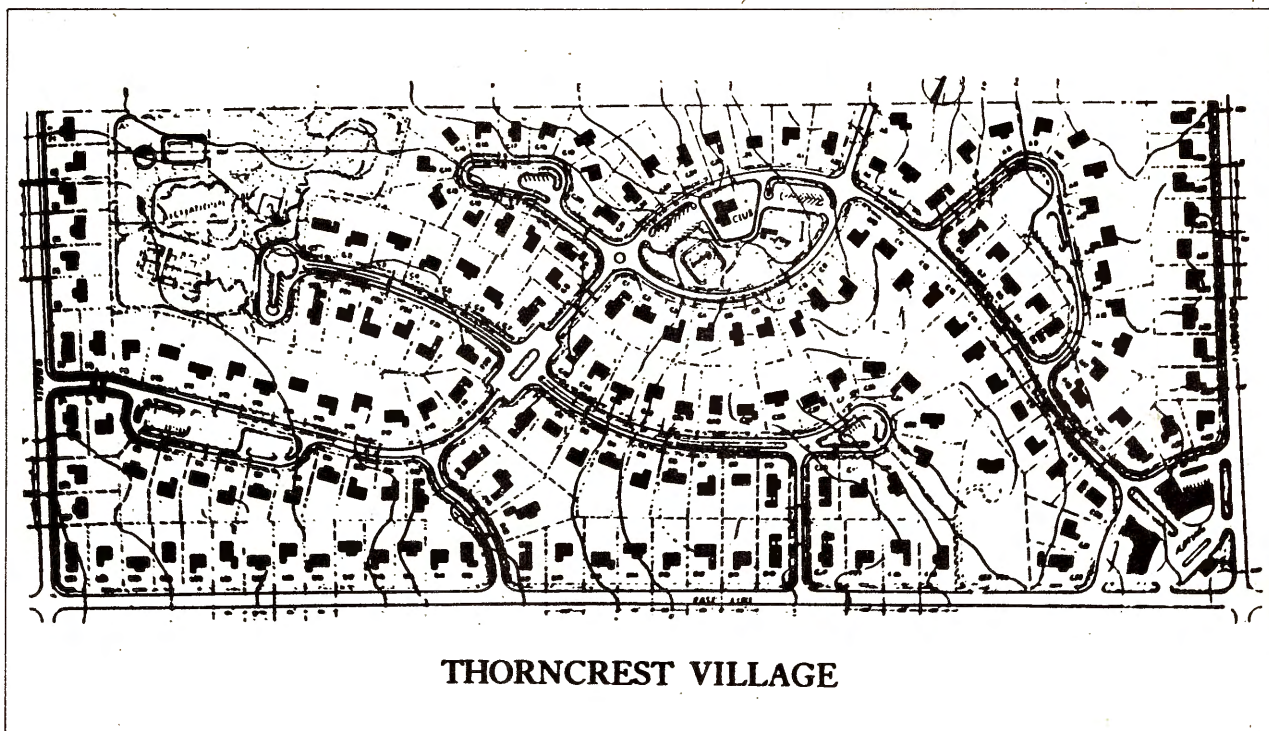


Dr. E.G. Faludi, a recognized authority in city planning in the 1940 s and '50 s, shown above in 1943 presenting his 30 Year Master Plan for Toronto to city officials. Photo: Subject to Approval: A Review of Municipal Planning in Ontario

community. This number of households normally contains about the number of children required to support a school of manageable proportions and buys enough to keep a diversified group of retail stores in business. It is big enough to require its own recreation area and not so big as to make its own shops, schools, and other community services too distant from any house in the neighbourhood.

With its population of 660,000 the City of Toronto has 85 public schools (one per 7,764 population) and 16 secondary schools (one per 41,250 population). On this basis the school district conforms very conveniently with the suggested size of a neighbourhood. Each new community with a population of about 7,500 will require one public school and a secondary school will have to be provided for each group of five neighbourhoods. In all, therefore, the 50,000 unit post-war housing program implies the need for 25 public schools and five secondary schools...

...Residential areas containing 50,000 houses should be provided with about 320 acres of open space. Each neighbourhood should have at least three acres developed as playgrounds for children of pre-school and school age. Five open spaces, each of about thirty acres, should be developed as playfields to serve the young people in a group of neighbourhoods. And in addition to these spaces planned for active recreation there should be a reasonable contribution, perhaps 100 acres, towards the general park system of the metropolitan area, preferably as an integral part of a continuous green belt connected with the ravines and natural landscape areas of the Don and Humber river systems. Each neighbourhood requires the service of a number of retail stores ... It seems probable that a community of 2,000 households can be quite adequately served by about forty stores which would require about five acres of land or frontage of about 1,400 feet. Considerations of traffic movement and convenient distribution of these little shopping centres will recommend that they should not be strung along traffic arteries but should be located in compact groups at strategic points. In all, not more than 125 acres of land should be required for this purpose.



Thorncrest Village, shown as built in 1948, in the Toronto suburb of Etobicoke. A self-contained community, controlled and regulated by deed restrictions, a property owners association, and by zoning by-laws. Illustration: A.I.P. Journal Spring 1950, p. 75

In addition to these specific requirements other features of residential communities will suggest themselves. Neighbourhood theatres and churches must be allowed for and there will be a need for a few light industries to provide local employment apart from the areas specifically zoned for industrial use.¹⁴

Carver's vision was one of building new communities, not just new housing. Up to that time this had only happened in the creation of company towns. Few people in Canada had given serious consideration to the implications of the development of new communities on the fringes of existing settlements.

In fact, of course, company towns are a poor precedent to follow on the outskirts of a city. They are oriented to one specific purpose, usually mining as in Kitimat, Elliot Lake, Arveda, and Innuvik. Houses have no independent market value since the only people who would like to buy them are those who work in the company town. Trying to gear up planning thought to the creation of diverse communities around a city was somewhat more complex. The market one was serving was fragmented; transportation pressures were diverse; housing mix was uncertain; land ownership was competitive. For Carver these were problems that could and should be overcome.

What was needed was someone to try these ideas out.

In England, the idea of new towns was already

being experimented with. Between 1946 and 1950, 14 new towns were undertaken, many just outside London. Carver's writing embodies the reports of English planners who, in 1946, outlined the same type of checklists for new communities. What Carver did *not* do was suggest that, as in England, new communities should be developed by government. As it turned out, they were developed in a manner entirely satisfactory to C.D. Howe.

THE HOUSE-BUILDING INDUSTRY

Until recently, house building was a fragmented industry. It was composed of many very small firms, each producing ten or fifteen houses a year, making a small average profit on each. There was almost no vertical integration. Some companies purchased small parcels of land, put in the servicing and sold off lots. Different companies purchased the serviced lots, built houses and then attempted to sell them. The example of Thorncrest Village is instructive: the company that owned the whole parcel sold off lots to builders and future owners, who carried out construction.

This meant there was substantial and vigorous

competition in the housing market. One would buy up land where one could and build on it when one could. One reason for the smallness of firms was that builders sought protection from the vagaries of market forces. Any builder with a large inventory of houses might find that a shift in the market would leave him with an investment he could not market, so builders stayed small and built in response to market demand.

Although no figures are available prior to 1958, the activities in the two decades between 1950 and 1970 give an indication of what was happening. In a study entitled *Subdivision Activity in the Periphery of the Toronto Urban Field*,¹⁵ figures are given of the subdivisions occurring in the outskirts of the Toronto Metropolitan area. From 1950-59, 11,550 acres of land were subdivided for housing purposes; from 1960-69, only 5,500 acres were subdivided. Generally, the lots were large (capable of supporting septic tanks) and no more than 12 persons per acre were housed on this subdivided land. What the figures indicate is that at midcentury there was a relatively high level of subdivision activity, which fell off after 1960 as the need of the building industry changed to conform more to the "efficient model" that Humphrey Carver described. As Hodge notes:

*This is a relatively small volume of subdivided land in the metropolitan region which is growing by about 60,000 persons per year. It refutes the convenient wisdom that we are vastly oversubdivided. Instead, a sharp slow-down in subdivision activity after 1960 could well be leading to a shortage of land available for urban development outside the urban fringe areas.*¹⁶

One of the people involved in this intensely competitive market prior to 1950 was E.P. Taylor. He had been involved, in a small way, in buying land, servicing it, subdividing it, and then selling off the serviced lots. That was the limit of activity that could be expected from any participant in the housing business. Until, that is, Don Mills. Don Mills radically altered the shape of the housing and property industry, so that instead of having many actors, the industry was reduced to a few gigantic corporations.

There are tremendous difficulties in writing definitively about the subject of the suburbs in Canada. There is a dearth of material available on who was thinking what 25 years ago. As well, very little of a critical nature has been written about Canadian planning, or the development of planning thought. While a limited number of descriptive documents on Don Mills are available, they are either repetitive (sometimes repeating the same errors), or written by the main actors involved in planning that community. Apart from random newspaper clippings, there is almost no information available on the deliberations of the Council of North York Township about Don Mills. For instance, the Council

minutes of the early nineteen fifties (which are typewritten, single spaced, unindexed, and running to 500 or more pages a year), contain almost no references to Council's involvement in the project. Even the minutes of the North York Planning Board reveal little, and the original planning reports (presuming such existed) have been either lost or misplaced.

Thus I have had to make do with what I could turn up in odd places - journals, government studies, and interviews with some of the personnel involved: Douglas Lee, James Murray, E.G. Faludi, and Macklin Hancock. While I have not quoted directly from those interviewed (except where their own remarks were published elsewhere), I have used the information they provided to draw as coherent a picture as I could of what really happened. My thanks to Vicki Casey of the Municipal Reference Library for locating much of the written reference material.

I would like to thank Susan Richardson for not only helping with the research for this paper, but also for being a part of the development and refinement of the ideas set out here. Also thanks to Robert Hill for obtaining and taking the photographs which appear in the article.

— J.S.

1. *Houses for Canadians*, p. 4
2. *Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction*, August 6, 1945. Report of the Plenary Session No. 1, p. 6f. Also see *Housing for Canadians*, Chapter 1
3. *Housing for Canadians*, p. 127
4. *Housing for Canadians*, p. 8f
5. *Post-War House Building in Canada*, CMHC, 1951, p. 6
6. *Ibid.*, p. 57
7. *Post-War House Building in Canada*, CMHC, p. 65
8. *Houses for Canadians*, Humphrey Carver, 1948, p. 63
9. *Ibid.*, p. 64
10. *Ibid.*, p. 69
11. *Ibid.*, p. 50. Monthly costs would be less if one assumed a downpayment of any amount.
12. Entitled *Land Development in the Municipal Area of Toronto*
13. *Houses for Canadians*, Humphrey Carver, 1948, p. 39-42
14. *Houses for Canadians*, Humphrey Carver, 1948, p. 39-42
15. *Subdivision Activity in the Periphery of the Toronto Urban Field*, G. Hodge, in *The Form of Cities in Central Canada*, L. Bourne (ed.)
16. *Ibid.*

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Don Mills: E.P. Taylor and Canada's first corporate suburb

In 1947, E.P. Taylor began to purchase farm land to the north and east of Toronto, in the Township of North York. He chose to buy in an area that, although only seven miles from downtown, was remote from other developed land. The site was cut off from Toronto by ravines to the west, south, and east; ravines that contained railways leading into the heart of the city. Roadways had never been constructed across the ravines, and access was limited to York Mills Road to the north, and Don Mills Road, which meandered down through the ravine to the south, and up the other side to join with the new subdivisions occurring in East York. At that time, the whole site consisted of 15 or 20 working farms.

In 1947 Taylor was one of Canada's most successful corporate businessmen. His prime success had come from combining small locally-based breweries into a single powerful company which was far more profitable — and hence valuable — than the parts of which it had been made. Taylor exercised his corporate power along with a small group of Toronto-based financiers who owned Argus Corporation.

Taylor purchased land through his company O'Keefe Realty Limited, rather than through one of the Argus companies. His intention, according to many people, was to buy land on which to establish a new plant for O'Keefe Breweries, one of his brewery companies, and then erect housing for workers at the plant.

Although Taylor's previous activities in real estate were limited, they were influential. He had developed the York Mills Plaza, the first regional shopping centre in Canada, just to the north and west of Don Mills. Prior to the successful plaza development — which was implemented just as he began his Don Mills acquisition, he had picked up land in the York Mills area to prevent it being subdivided into small 25-foot lots. He serviced this land, and then subdivided it into large lots known as Wrentham Estates.

In the Wrentham Estates scheme, Taylor had sold off the serviced lots to small builders at \$3,200 per lot — a high price in those days. In turn, the builders erected houses which increased the value of the land, and kept the profit for themselves. It is possible that Taylor recognized the money that could be made if somehow controls were established throughout the process of servicing, subdividing, building, and selling, so that the profits at each stage could flow into one pocket rather than two or three.

By 1952, Taylor had purchased 31 parcels of land totalling 2,063 acres; almost all of the island of land created by the ravine system. By that time, the idea of using the land for Taylor's presumed industrial intentions had long been abandoned: the game plan was to develop a new community.

It is not clear just when, and from what source, the idea of a new community came. As Taylor continued to purchase land, it must have been clear to

those involved that the early idea of an industrial plant and workers' housing had been superseded. Perhaps it was Carl Fraser, executive assistant to Taylor, who gave birth to the idea. Taylor had only previously employed two persons who might have some inkling of American thinking about new communities, or of the concepts that Humphrey Carver was developing; John Layng, an architect who had worked out the concepts for the York Mills Plaza; and Macklin Hancock, a landscape architect who, through his father's company, Cooksville Nursery, had devised landscape and planning ideas for both the plaza and Wrentham Estates. Layng, however, was more an architect than a planner, and Hancock was still a student more interested in landscaping and the environment than planning.

By 1950, Taylor and Carl Fraser (who was the father-in-law of Hancock) had decided that some comprehensive development was required, perhaps along the line of a new community. By this time, the English were well into the development of their Mark I new towns, but Taylor turned to the Americans for advice. By 1951, consultations had taken place with the Urban Land Institute, an American body consisting of community developers from across the United States. Later, presentations of the community plan proposals were made to the Institute in Seattle and Cincinnati, and members of the Institute visited the site in early 1952 to put their final seal of approval on the scheme.

As the idea of creating a new community took hold, Fraser discussed the idea frequently with his son-in-law, Macklin Hancock. Hancock was then attending Harvard, taking post graduate studies in landscaping and town planning from Sir William Holford, Hideo Sasacki, and Walter Gropius, all exponents of new town theory. Thus Hancock was in the thick of the discussion about the very proposal which Taylor and Fraser seemed to consider viable for their 2,000 acre parcel.

In 1951, Taylor called the members of the North York Council to a meeting at the Granite Club. He presented a model of a residential development for the site. Faludi, as North York's planning consultant, objected: he wanted industry included in order to help balance the assessment load. Taylor went back to the drawing boards and John Layng proposed a mixed development, incorporating Faludi's wishes.

At this point Fraser and Layng had a falling-out, and Layng either resigned or was fired for reasons that are now obscure. Fraser looked for someone new to coordinate planning. He turned to Hancock, who was still at school. After some reluctance, Hancock agreed to leave his studies at Harvard, and in March 1952, he joined the company. He immediately put together a team of young planners — he was in his mid-twenties — to develop the concept. Assisting him was Douglas Lee,



Karl Fraser, president of Don Mills Developments Ltd. (left), industrialist James Harris (center rear), and planner Macklin Hancock (right) witness the signature of the first Don Mills housebuilder Arthur Weinstock. Photo: *Architectural Forum* June 1954

a student of Sasacki. Later, a couple of young Toronto architects — Henry Feliss and James Murray — were called upon to help sort out architectural problems. By September 1952, the plan was completed in its first draft form.

Up to this point, two names had been considered for the new community: Yorktown (Toronto used to be known as York) and Eptown (presumably after E.P. Taylor himself). Hancock coined Don Mills, since there was a mill at the site on the Don River. The name appeared to satisfy the directors and on May 8, 1952, O'Keefe Realty changed its name to Don Mills Development Corporation.

William Holford, the influential planner of new towns, visited the site in the summer of 1952, and gave his blessing, both to the appropriateness of the site itself and to the concepts underlying the plan. It appears, however, that the model being pursued was more in line with American than British thinking. Perhaps Holford can be credited with the appearance of the semi-detached house in Don Mills, a building form used extensively in Britain, but much out of favour in North America.

Hancock considered that he was on a temporary furlough, and that in a year he would return to school. He requested from his Harvard teachers that his work be treated as a credit to his degree work. They demurred. In their opinion, this attempt to establish a new town of a scope not before



Aerial view of Don Mills in 1958, looking south-east, with 6 storey apartments and shopping plaza at centre, and low density housing at periphery. Photo: CMHC

seen in North America would soon fail, and Hancock would be back to school in a few months. They never thought Don Mills would be translated from paper to reality.

THE PLANNERS' PLAN

The Hancock team set to work developing concepts for the new community. The plan contained five elements that were new and untried in Canada.

First and most important was the neighbourhood principle. The community would be broken into four neighbourhoods surrounding a regional shopping centre. The hub of each neighbourhood was the elementary school. As Hancock said:

The neighbourhood unit in each case is composed of all the elements which go toward making the elementary school the cultural focus. It is felt that with our present day approach to living, the congregating factor between people who live in groups tends to be the elementary school with its related community activities, such as adult education groups, cultural study groups, hobby and horticultural groups, etc. ... To that end the physical plan developed locates the school at the centre of each neighbourhood, the residential street system focusing toward the school with its related

playground and open space. Residents then will be conscious of their neighbourhood identity in the overall scheme of the town.¹

The neighbourhood, although it had its own elementary school and its own local store and church, was seen as part of a community. The community consisted of four neighbourhoods which found their common tie in the town centre, where one found a high school, a library, regional shopping facilities including a supermarket, a post office and other such services. Thus a definite structure, expressed in physical plans, was proposed.

The second major element was an attempt to separate vehicular traffic and pedestrians. Pedestrian walkways were established throughout the project leading to the centre of each neighbourhood (the elementary school) and to the activities in the town centre. A hierarchy of streets where the function (arterial, collector, local) was accommodated in design was established, a concept new to Canada at this time. There were two arterial roads, Lawrence and Don Mills, which bisected in the middle of the site. This was the only bisection of two streets: the rest were all T-intersections. Collector and local streets were designed in such a way that through traffic would have great difficulty getting out of the maze created. A ring road separated the town centre from the residential areas. With the extensive walkway system and road system which discouraged traffic, it was thought that vehicles and pedestrians would never meet. To emphasize the point, walkways were not provided.

The third great emphasis was placed in planning green spaces. In fact, green space was the major design element in the plan, as reflected in the walkway system, the preservation of many mature trees, and the design of the street system to take advantage of the surrounding ravines. Natural topographic features — such as the rolling land in the south west quadrant — were designed around, rather than levelled, and to some extent dictated the interior road system. The branch of the Don River in the north east quadrant was to be dammed to provide a small lake for boating and swimming.

Fourth, work opportunities were to be provided for residents of Don Mills. Thus, large areas were set aside for industry where 5,000 or more workers would be employed. This, of course, meant that the walkways would be used not only by school children, but also by residents coming to and from work. Don Mills was not to be a dormitory suburb. To accomplish this, the planners had to ensure that workers could afford to live in Don Mills. Accordingly, the plan called for a mix of housing types at a range of prices. Inexpensive housing — semi-detached two and three bedroom units — was to be available for sale; rental accommodation both at market rates and by way of government subsidy, was to be provided, as well as more expensive

housing.

Fifth, great consideration was to be given to architectural and other design elements. In order to ensure a high standard of design, all houses would have to be built by architects approved by the company, and only approved materials could be used. Colour controls would be used to help ensure that the new community had its own special feel in the early stages until residents could impose their own sense of community.

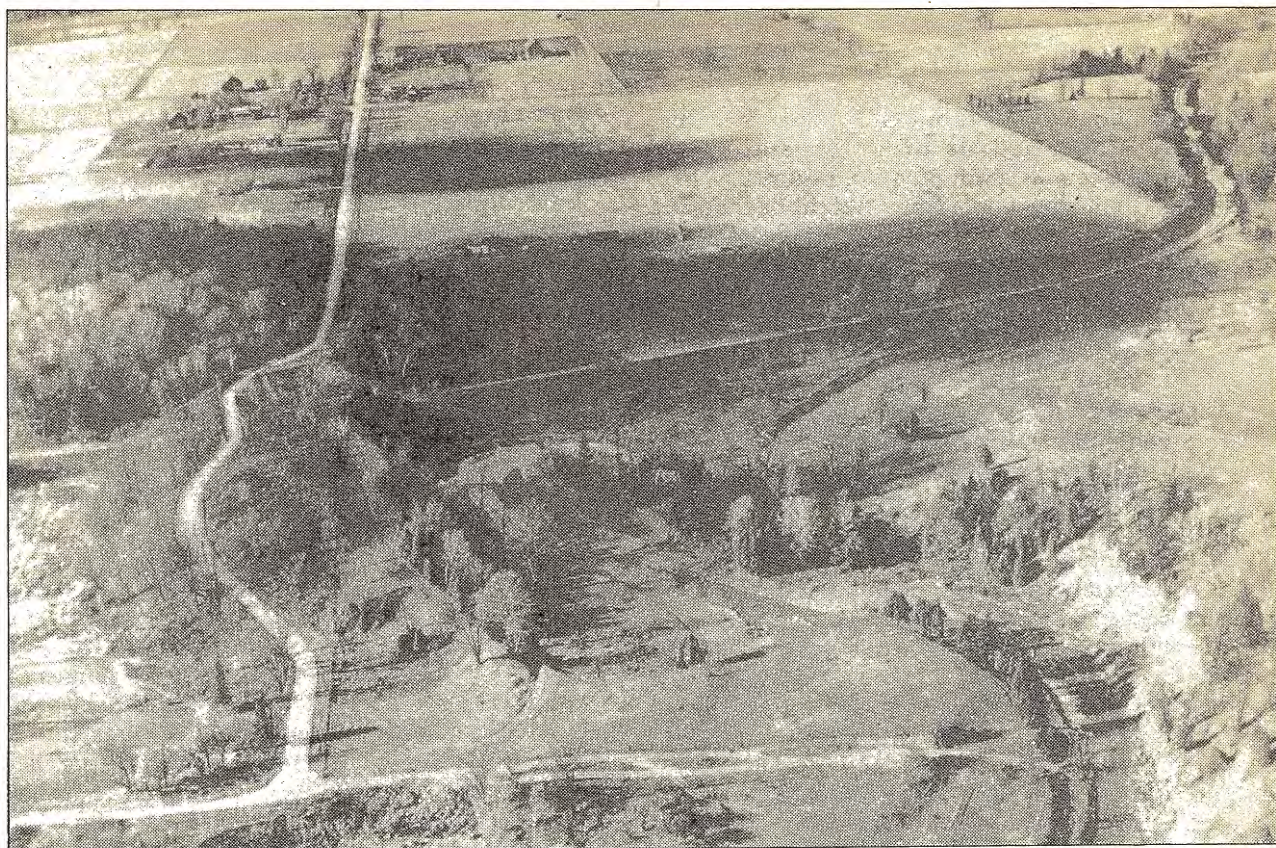
In concept, the plan for Don Mills was revolutionary for Canada. As *Architectural Forum* said, "The new town of Don Mills is a planner's dream coming true."² This was the first serious attempt to design a real community in a comprehensive way.

Looking back, it is easy to notice some assumptions that are not valid. For instance, Don Mills was not seen as a commuter suburb of Toronto. It was to be a community that was generally self-sufficient. Don Mills was never planned to be a housing estate for upper income people. Instead the planners specifically attempted to ensure that housing was available for all types of people, with all ranges of income. Don Mills was not designed to serve the automobile. The pedestrian's interest was considered paramount, with automobiles being accommodated almost as a necessary evil. The design and colour controls were intended not to dominate people, but to help create a sense of place that people might relate to in the early years. After all, given the choice of house builders or architects deciding on design, materials, and colours, isn't it reasonable to prefer architects?

The approach to house forms was of great significance to the feel of Don Mills, even though it has now become traditional in present day suburban development.

Hancock shunned the North York minimum lot size of 40 by 125 feet in favour of a wider squatter lot of 60 by 100 feet. This allowed him to erect a detached house, set widthwise to the street. The idea of putting the whole house along the street was relatively new to Canada, and is probably the most noticeable aspect of suburbia. Why was it done? Hancock provides some clues in an article he wrote in 1954:

For single-family houses, lots are designed wider and less deep than is usual in most subdivisions. In the opinion of the designer, elbow room is a desirable characteristic and allows for increased spacial interests and an ability to site houses both broadside to the street and with the narrow dimension to the street. In many subdivisions, too, the rear portion of the lots is poorly maintained and a burden to the homeowner. The more square lot gives insulation between houses... Because the houses are small, open planning has been encouraged in order to increase the visual space within the units. Individual lot widths have been made an average of 60 feet in order that more space will be provided between the housing units. With more land immediately surrounding the houses, design sitings were directed toward a better use of this land and a closer contact with the land.³



Don Mills 1949, looking west across Don Valley, with Don Mills Rd. and Lawrence Ave. E. intersection at upper left.

Don Mills 1970, from similar vantage point, with Don Valley Parkway in foreground, and Don Mills Plaza at upper left. Photos: *Boomtown Toronto* D. Kirkup 1970



It is interesting to note that such an influential decision was made for such value-laden reasons. More practical reasons could have been cited for the choice. First, wide lots allowed everyone to have a separate driveway. No longer would it be necessary to impinge upon one's ownership by having to share a mutual drive. Similarly, the rear land concept, used extensively until the Second World War in most cities, could also be seen as giving a lack of clarity of ownership. Second, this form of house design helped provide a distinctiveness for Don Mills, important in attempting to market housing in the new community. Even the semi-detached houses employ the same broad-sided approach, although on smaller lots. Third, the wider lot allowed a house to be built with more windows, more natural light. Thus a smaller house could appear to be larger than it was.

Another remarkable feature of the houses is that few were of two-storey design. In most cases they were a ranch-style with a full basement. Since the earliest houses built were modest (1,000 square foot dwellings were common), the planners were attempting to give people basements that could be converted into real living space either as extra bedrooms (the basements were not entirely below grade) or recreation rooms.

The townhouses and apartment units had the same ranch style look about them. This was partly due to the 35-foot height limit the North York Council had imposed on the township, but mainly due to the design approach used.

Design controls went beyond residential units. They applied to industrial buildings (where again an architect was required — something unheard of), and to the shopping centre.

In sum, the plan was very idealistic. It incorporated the best thinking of the day, thinking that was, above all else, directed at providing the best living and working environment possible.

THE CORPORATE STRATEGY

Hancock himself describes the aim of Taylor's company best:

It is the aim of the Development Company to create under the free enterprise system, an integrated new town which will satisfy the requirements of private development and which will also be in accordance with the best principles of town planning. In view of their long-range interest in this project, the Development Company is particularly conscious of the need for long-term worth in such a development.⁴

The question that faced everyone involved was whether good planning was compatible with good business. In the long term, as Hancock notes, the marketability of Don Mills depended on the plan

making sense. If it didn't then there would be no market three or four years later.

Taylor recognized early that the key was control of land prices. The best way to keep control of those prices was by, attaching conditions to any land disposed of. Thus, in selling serviced industrial lots, the company wrote in a first option to repurchase for 20 years. If the construction of the factory was not started within three years, then the land would revert to the company at the original selling price.

In regard to residential land, the situation was more complex. Originally Taylor had wanted one contractor to build all the houses: this would allow the development company itself to market the houses and capture any increases accruing because of the success of the project. However, the planning team convinced him — and in fact the lack of any sizeable house building firms in Canada dictated it — that a great variety of builders should be used in order to achieve reasonable diversity in the new community. A strategy had to be devised to keep land prices in the developer's control.

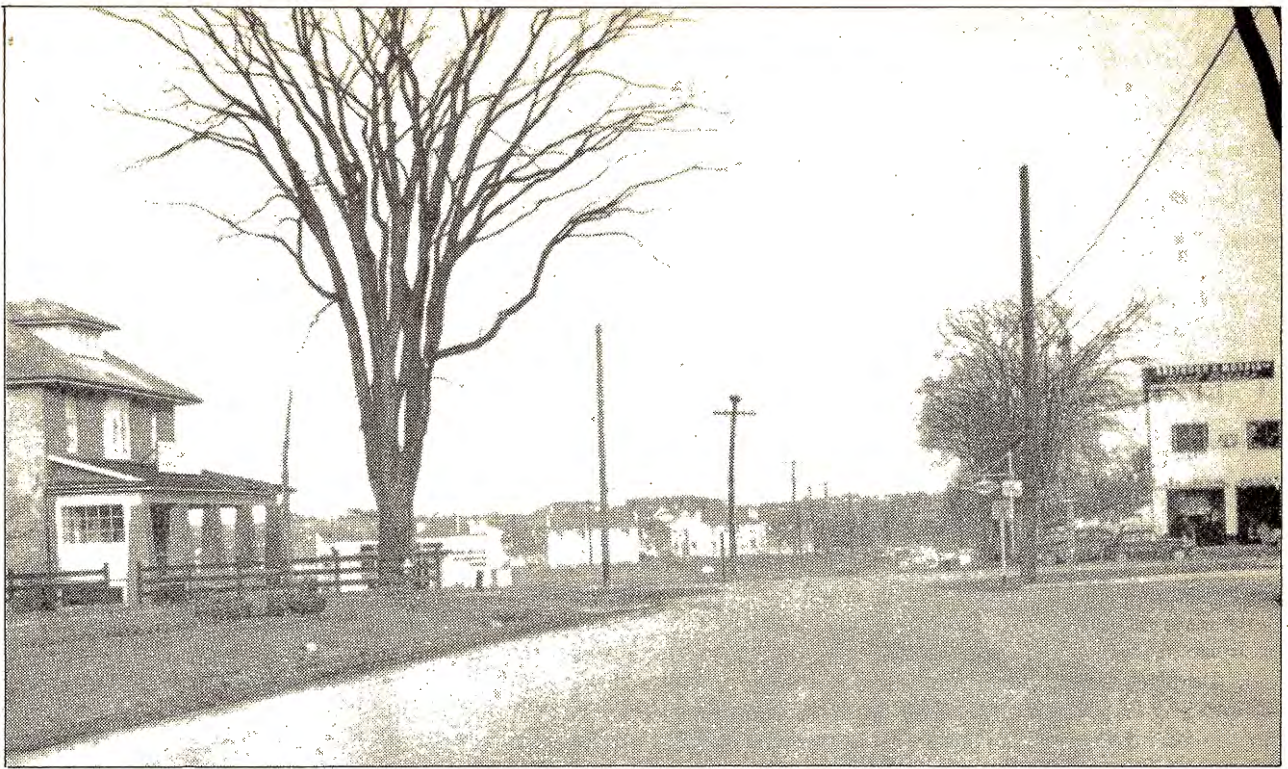
The model used was to sell a few lots to a builder by agreement of purchase and sale requiring 25 per cent down, the balance due in 18 months. This meant that mortgage problems were minimized for the builder, providing he built and sold immediately. It also meant that if the builder's performance was unsatisfactory, then the company could intervene and ensure that the same builder did not get invited to take another ten lots next year, or if he did, then on different terms.

This arrangement had added benefits for the company. Marketing was a responsibility of the builders. Not only would they compete among themselves (in all more than 50 building firms were used), but these firms would not build anywhere else in Toronto in a manner that would be prejudicial to the Don Mills market. As well, the small firms, rather than the company, could arrange their own mortgage financing during construction and for the new owner.

While these benefits meant that the company had to do little of the hard slogging in order to increase land values (which were simply skimmed off), the company did not stay totally aloof since it had an interest in ensuring houses were sold. Two methods were used to help market the product.

First, a large scale model was developed, showing where every road, house, factory, and other building would be. The model was detailed enough to show trees liberally sprinkled across the site. Prospective buyers and mortgage lenders could see for themselves how the plan fitted together.

Second, the company established a mobile information office which moved from site to site as development proceeded. Tied to this was a promotional campaign funded equally by the company



Don Mills 1954, looking east on Lawrence Ave. E., to intersection of Don Mills Rd. Note new Don Mills Information Centre at north-east corner. Photo: Sammon Collection, Toronto Public Library Archive

and the builders by lot levy. As well, the company had its own public relations firm which helped trumpet the good news about Don Mills in the media.

As for the shopping centre, that was a business that Taylor understood well. After his experience with the York Mills Plaza, his strategy was to never dispose of the land. Accordingly, he built all the buildings and leased them out to main tenants, basing rents on gross sales.

The corporate plan was widely successful. So successful, in fact, that in 1955 Taylor began acquiring 6,000 acres of land west of Toronto for the mammoth Erin Mills development which by 1976 was only half built. And, as we shall see, by 1955 the corporate plan overtook the planners' plan, and imposed its own imperative.

The attached diagram puts the Don Mills plan in graphic form: a town centre at the intersection of Lawrence Avenue East and Don Mills Roadway, surrounded by low density houses. The breakdown in land use was as follows:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Schools | 85 acres |
| Churches | 16 acres |
| Parks (including a private golf course) | 376 acres |
| Residential | 793 acres |
| Commercial | 60 acres |
| Industrial | 309 acres |
| Public utility and undeveloped | 34 acres |
| Street allowances including railways | 300 acres |
| | 2,062 acres |

The residential acreage contained 8,121 housing units, of which 4,500 were apartment units. Altogether some 29,000 people were to live in Don Mills. They were served by eight elementary and three secondary schools, as well as nine churches of various denominations.

The town centre containing 36 acres of land (including a curling rink and an arena) operated as a regional shopping centre, with the usual paraphernalia of uses. The shopping centre was planned for two levels, but in fact the second level was never completed. The area within the ring road north of Lawrence consisted entirely of small apartment buildings. Originally the plan called for corner stores and some 17 acres of land were set aside for their development. However, tenants could not be found to operate the stores and they were never built.

On the 300 acres of industrially-designated land (mostly to the south), there are a total of 2.5-million square feet of floor space. This means the floor space index for industry was about 0.2, indicating that factories are set among acres of grass and trees. In all, a total of 63 industrial firms employing 4,500 people are located in Don Mills. Three-storey apartment buildings "buffered" housing from the industry.

Don Mills was built over a period of nine years, beginning in 1953 with the first housing units being made available early in 1954. Following is a summary of the residential program on a cumulative basis:

| By Date | | Yearly No. of Units | Accumulative Sub-total | Accumulative Totals | |
|-----------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Dec. 1953 | Housing | 144 | 144) | | |
| | Apartments | | | 144 | 504 people |
| Dec. 1954 | Housing | 658 | 802) | | |
| | Apartments | 287 | 287) | 1,089 | 3,811 people |
| Dec. 1955 | Housing | 732 | 1,534) | | |
| | Apartments | 406 | 693) | 2,227 | 7,794 people |
| Dec. 1956 | Housing | 470 | 2,004) | | |
| | Apartments | 330 | 1,023) | 3,027 | 10,594 people |
| Dec. 1957 | Housing | 376 | 2,380) | | |
| | Apartments | 59 | 1,082) | 3,462 | 12,117 people |
| Dec. 1958 | Housing | 620 | 3,000) | | |
| | Apartments | 563 | 1,645) | 4,645 | 16,257 people |
| Apr. 1959 | Housing | 50 | 3,060) | | |
| | Apartments | 200 | 1,854) | 4,905 | 17,166 people |
| June 1960 | Housing | 374 | 3,434) | | |
| | Apartments | 328 | 2,173) | 5,607 | 19,625 people |
| June 1961 | Housing | 186 | 3,620) | | |
| | Apartments | 641 | 2,814) | 6,434 | 22,519 people |
| July 1962 | Housing | 0 | 3,630) | | |
| | Apartments | 869 | 3,683) | 7,303 | 25,561 people |
| Ultimate | Housing | 0 | 3,620) | | |
| | Apartments | 818 | 4,501) | 8,121 | 28,426 people |

The private golf course occupied some 140 acres, which left about 240 acres of parkland for residents and workers. Adjacent to every school was a neighbourhood park, and residential areas were laced with walkways (since turned over to the municipality) leading to the schools. The lake proposed for the north-east quadrant never got built. It appears this branch of the Don River was dammed further to the north before the company had begun to make plans to install a dam just to the north of Lawrence.

Today, the plan is so ordinary that it elicits almost no response. But in 1952, it was breaking new ground.

FROM PLANNERS' PLAN TO CORPORATE PLAN

A major concern of the Don Mills Development Ltd. was to ensure that the site was properly serviced. Most important, the site needed some connections to the rest of the metropolitan area: the tenuous link of Don Mills Roadway wandering through the Don Valley to the south, and the York Mills Road connection to the north, were not enough. Plans for a major Toronto bypass — Highway 401 — were in the final stages, but that expressway was to the north. Hancock wanted connections to the south.

As usual, municipal politicians were obliging in regard to access routes. In the spring of 1953, when Metro Chairman Fred Gardner⁵ turned the sod for one of the new industries in Don Mills, he opined that Metro should do everything it could to ensure that Eglinton Avenue was extended easterly in order to provide access just to the south of the site. In spite of Gardner's good intentions, this extension did not get built until the early nineteen sixties, when the Flemingdon Park development was under way.

But there was better luck with connection due south. One of the first items of business the new Metro Council discussed was the Don Valley Expressway, coming up the ravine just to the east of Don Mills. This expressway was approved expeditiously, and construction followed. Thus the necessary external links were put in place by the newly-established Metro Toronto government.

In 1950 North York Council decided that developers would have to pay for internal servicing arrangements in major subdivision schemes. Since Metro was not yet formed, external arrangements — such as water supply and sewage treatment — had to be provided by the township itself. The company was in some quandary as to how to proceed. North York had no water supply of its own, and did not want to finance water trunk-line extensions. As well, North York did not want to fund a sewage plant. Part of the North York Council's fear was that the assessment of the new community

would not fund the debt.

A deal was struck. The company would build the sewage treatment plant. (It cost \$1.25 million, and was located where the lake had been planned.) As for the water service, the company would buy North York bonds in order to finance the trunk lines. Funds would be placed in escrow by the company to meet the debt service on the bonds in the event the assessment was insufficient to do so.

As it turned out, the funds in escrow were returned to the company. The promised assessment split of 40 per cent industrial/commercial, 60 per cent residential was generally met. Credit for this goes to Carl Fraser. He was able to entice industry to the area beyond everyone's expectation. To some extent he was helped by the earlier decision of IBM to establish its Toronto plant at the corner of Eglinton and Don Mills Roadway, just to the south of the site. By 1952, IBM had completed a \$1.5-million plant, and in 1953, that company began a \$2.0-million expansion. By 1953, Fraser had brought in firms that were already putting the finishing touches to their factories. Few of these industries were linked to the Argus group, Taylor's powerful holding company.

Schools had to be provided in the new community. These again were matters of great cost to the municipality. In order to make things a bit easier the company provided a cash grant which allowed the first school to be built. The company used the same controls on resale. Usually, the company sold the land on the condition that the school board was "bound to use said land only as school and playground and not for any other purpose including industrial or commercial purposes." As well, excavation could only occur for a school building and, except for that excavation, no other sand, soil, or gravel could be removed. The third condition was that the school board was not allowed to cut down a living tree unless it was in the area to be excavated.

While the company claimed that it sold school land at cost, one search indicates that land purchased by O'Keefe Realty for \$500 per acre was sold to the North York Board of Education for \$6,000 per acre some four years later. The company retained the first option to re-purchase for 20 years, and required the Board of Education to build within three years. After the first school was under way, it seems the company had the school board hooked, and no concessions by the company were required: the board could be treated like any other purchaser.

Residential construction began in 1953. Early on, there were problems with the builders who resented having to hire architects, and have their designs and materials approved by the company. As well, mortgage lenders were wary about the new community concept. But as the development began to catch on, the criticism vanished, and both builders and mortgage lenders became co-operative.⁶

Of course, there were interesting sidelines. Taylor disliked blue shingles, and they were excluded from the acceptable colour guidelines. In at least one instance, the architects recommended materials which were supplied only by a non-Argus controlled building contractor. (Argus Corporation had a good share of the building supply market.) Taylor bought out the competitor whose goods the architects were recommending. In all probability Taylor-controlled companies benefitted from Don Mills (one of the first examples of vertical integration in the building industry). But this was probably not planned by Taylor as the way to make the big money: it was simply a happy coincidence.

The north-west quadrant was the first to be developed, and the planners' ideas were followed closely. For example, the edge of the ravine was not occupied by luxury housing, but rather by semi-detached houses, so in the planners' terms, as many people as possible could enjoy the ravine.

But there was consternation over the question of whether good planning was good business. When Carl Fraser died of a heart attack at a board meeting in September 1954, Taylor looked for a replacement who would be hard-headed, with a good business sense, someone who might control the idealism of the planners. He chose Angus McClaskey, then regional manager for Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Taylor need not have worried. The development was proceeding well. But since the opportunity to increase profits was apparent, Taylor took it, even though it interfered with the spirit of the plan. For instance, the company decided not to fight when North York objected to the building of two-bedroom houses. The planners had wanted to have them built so that it was clear housing was readily available to factory workers.

Similarly, the company decided not to conclude an agreement with CMHC for low-income housing. CMHC wished to rent townhouses from the company at \$67.50 a month, and then subsidize the rents of those who lived there. The company refused to rent the houses for less than \$75.00 a month. Negotiations broke off, and the company rented the houses on the market for more than \$100 a month.

The house market was booming. When in the mid-nineteen fifties CMHC removed the funding limit and size restriction on new houses, as well as requiring larger down payments, the company responded by increasing the size of houses, and increasing the price of lots. Taylor's strategy for increasing profits by controlling land had worked. His company had established a valuable commodity in Don Mills, and he had no intention of stifling the market because of the planners' concepts of a heterogeneous community. The following chart gives an indication of price increases as the new community became a success.

| Year | No. of Units | Price Range |
|------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1953 | 144 | \$12,500-\$16,000 |
| 1954 | 658 | \$13,714-\$16,000 |
| 1955 | 732 | \$15,000-\$45,000 |
| 1956 | 470 | \$17,000-\$45,000 |
| 1957 | 376 | \$17,000-\$65,000 |
| 1958 | 620 | \$15,000-\$26,000 |
| 1959 | 60 | \$15,000-\$26,000 |
| 1960 | 374 | \$17,000-\$27,000 |
| 1961 | 186 | \$22,000-\$45,000 |

Thus the plan was changed, mainly because it was successful beyond anyone's expectation. The intention of providing housing for 50 per cent of the work force was never realized because the market, rather than the plan, became the dominant factor. Today, for instance, less than 5 per cent of the Don Mills work force is resident in Don Mills. With its success, the company was able to forgo other amenities — particularly those of a recreational nature — which it had planned. The corporate plan superseded the planners' plan.

In 1956, Hancock and a number of his associates left the company to form Project Planning Associates, where they could (and did) offer their planning services to the world.

DON MILLS ACROSS CANADA

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Don Mills on urban development in Canada. Don Mills defined the basic design elements and the business practices now used in contemporary suburban developments. While certain direct refinements have taken place, the form has remained relatively constant.

Some direct descendants of Don Mills are Erin Mills, Meadowvale, and Bramalea, all in the Toronto area; Bow River in Calgary, and Kanata in Ottawa.

Perhaps of more importance is the direct descendant of the Don Mills approach: Canada's suburbia. It is, after all, difficult to assemble very large chunks of land where a new community can be planned by just one development company. Instead, the usual occurrence is for the large developers to own patchwork quilts of one- or two-hundred acre holdings. In this situation, the initiative for an overall plan comes from municipal or regional planning staff. The plan produced is usually a replica of the Don Mills model, altered slightly to accommodate local conditions and indi-

vidual land holdings.

One good example of this is in Scarborough, a borough within Metro Toronto, which has been divided into communities modelled after Don Mills. For instance, the recently approved Milliken plan (see attached sketch) mimics Don Mills in a sad way. Note the town centre, the ring road, the townhouses buffering the single-detached homes from the highrise apartments and shopping plaza in the town centre. To the east and west of this 1,000-acre parcel are industrial areas. Yet the Milliken plan is no different than the plan for other blocks of Scarborough, where the land mass is divided arbitrarily in communities, each with their own town centre, each with their access to industry.

When the chunks are smaller, and no "community plan" is possible, the ghost of Don Mills still appears. Roadways follow their meandering patterns (even if they do so at the expense of topography), house forms remain similar, and the feel is the same.

The similarities are not difficult to spot since the principles underlying suburban planning remain constant. The following planning principles are worth noting as being common to almost all suburban development since Don Mills:

(i) The planners attempt to devise a residential/industrial assessment split that allows them to consider the new community as somewhat self-sufficient in theory, if not in practice. Thus the new approach of "comprehensive planning" usually includes swatches of industrial land, even if it is not marketable. But while an assessment split is planned which would produce the required number of tax dollars at a reasonable mill rate, if the industrial land is occupied, this assessment split does not allow residents of the new community to work within the community. In almost every case the price of housing is such that an ordinary worker in the local factory could not afford to live there. Thus the assessment split never leads to self-sufficiency.

(ii) Developments are planned with open space as the predominant design element. Thus sites are laced with walkways, bicycle paths, and other forms of open space. Grass is everywhere — around schools, churches, highrise apartments, and roads. So much so, in fact, that one senses land is deliberately being underused.

(iii) A grid system of roadways, the predominant design element in Canadian cities, is never used. Instead, there is a hierarchy of roads separating traffic functions. Arterial roads usually define the boundaries of the site, while the interior consists of a maze of cul-de-sacs and languidly meandering collector and ring roads.

Only non-residents cars are treated like a necessary evil. The design of the roadway system prevents the outside world from intruding into the suburb. But the function of the automobile to drive

into the city, to drive to shop, to drive to recreation centres, is clearly recognized and provided for in profusion.

To emphasize the disdain for the automobile within the suburb, houses rarely front on arterial roadways. Instead, the arterial roadways are lined with highback fences, as though the arterial had no function except that of a traffic artery.

(iv) All of the new comprehensively-planned developments have what is euphemistically called a town centre. This centre is usually surrounded by a ring road system within which is a regional shopping centre and high-density housing, usually in the form of highrise apartments. Just outside the ring road system are blocks of street townhouses (row housing) which "buffer" the single family housing from the town centre. The new town centre usually fails to work as such: it is simply a collection of non-residential uses required to provide minimal support services: a supermarket, a restaurant, a few small stores, a high school, a library, perhaps a small office building, a gas station.

(v) The structure usually consists of a "community" made up of a number of "neighbourhoods." The neighbourhoods contain about 6,000 persons, and are centred around one or more public schools, which, in turn, are flanked by a neighbourhood park. This structure exists on paper, but not in reality. Attempts are made to enforce the community feeling by assigning a name to it.

(vi) The house forms in all these developments are similar: split-level, detached houses with a sprinkling of attached houses (either as semi-detached or row housing), plus highrise apartments. There is a strong separation between types of persons who are allowed to live in various places. For instance, single-family housing is not designed to accommodate either roomers or other tenants. Tenants are expected to live in the highrise apartments. Every housing unit is equipped with space for an automobile.

(vii) Business practices have become more sophisticated since Don Mills. Now, an extremely detailed agreement is signed between the developer and the builder specifying when houses will be built, materials to be used, sale price of the house and land, design of the house, and all other relevant matters. The contractual relationship pursued in Don Mills has been superseded by an arrangement where the builder is little more than an agent for the developer, although he is responsible for selling the product he built. The builder is in a difficult situation since his ability to make a profit is so circumscribed by the controls of the developer. The only opportunity for profit lies in the house being built. Accordingly, there is a tendency to cut corners on construction work in order to generate extra cash. In Ontario, this has led to the enactment of legislation which requires the builder

(not the developer, who to all intents and purposes is responsible) to provide a two-year warranty on the new home.

Hard services within the site are provided by the developer. This requirement when originally set in the mid-nineteen fifties was probably seen by municipalities as a way of having someone else pay for necessities. In fact, it has helped permit the large firms, which have easy access to capital, to totally dominate the market.

Marketing practices appear to follow the Don Mills model: part of the advertising costs are paid by the developer (in plugging the development as a whole) and part are paid by the builder (in hiring real estate agents, and advertising his specific homes). Usually the developer pays for the information booth which is set up at the entrance to the new suburb.

It is remarkable that no planning models other than Don Mills exist for suburban Canada. The example of the city, with its compactness and diversity of uses, its grid system, and flexible residency arrangements, has never been followed since Don Mills. One attempt at a different direction — Le Breton Flats in Ottawa — is now under way, but it is an experiment funded by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Don Mills model was snapped up quickly, and followed slavishly. and the city got left behind.

1. *Journal of RAIC*, 1954, p.3

2. *Architectural Forum*, June 1954, p. 148

3. *RAIC Journal*, Vol. 31, 1954, p.3f

4. *RAIC Journal*, Vol. 31, 1954, p.3f

5. The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, a regional government under the guise of a federation of municipalities, was formed January 1, 1953. Metro is responsible for major transportation services, including roads and expressways.

6. See *The Canadian Architect*, March 1956, p.24f

Why suburbia hasn't worked

Suburbia is inhabited by ordinary people. Like most Canadians, suburban residents try to make ends meet and have aspirations for greater economic security and a happier life. The sociology — and the social problems — of the suburbs have attracted a good deal of attention from academics and journalists. Much of this work has made the error of attributing all the characteristics of suburban life to the suburbs, instead of recognizing that people often have problems no matter where they live, and that new settlements take a while to begin to function normally. More serious is the fact that the analysis of the suburbs has concentrated on real or imagined social problems, and ignored the political and economic problems generated by the suburban development pattern for suburbanites and for other urban residents. Some of the problems deserve specific consideration.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

1. High house prices

The cost of housing is increasing dramatically throughout Canada. Since almost all net new housing is being provided in suburbia, it is fair to say that the cost of suburban housing is the major determinant of prices in the housing market generally.

An analysis by a development industry consul-

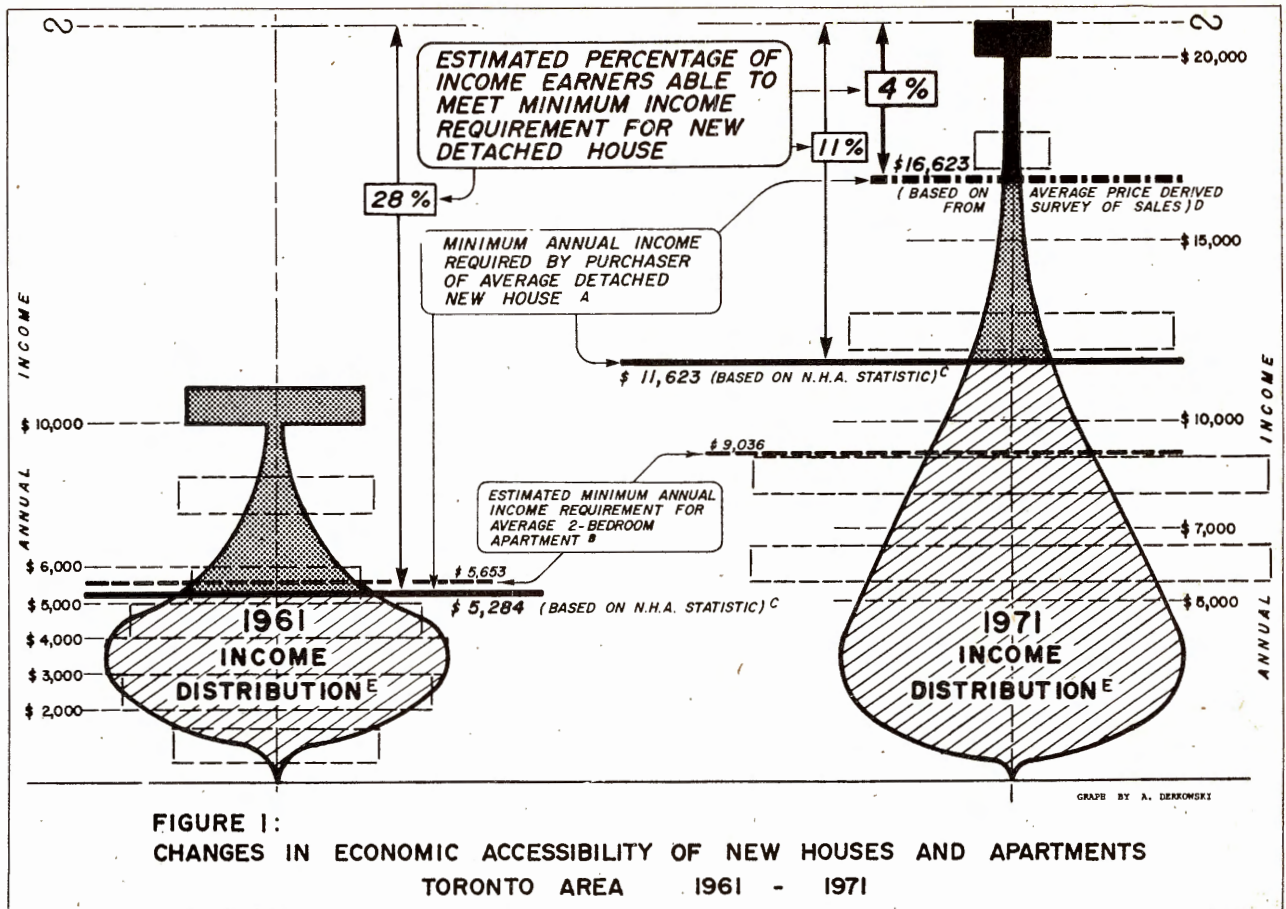
tant (see figure 1) indicates the degree of change in house prices and in who can now afford to buy a new house funded under the National Housing Act.¹ What is noticeable from the chart is that while 28 per cent of income earners could afford to buy an NHA house in 1961, by 1971 the figure had dropped to 11 per cent. It is clear that many people are being excluded from the market.

Government figures arrive at the same results. The Government of Ontario in its booklet *Housing Ontario 1974* states:

The income distribution for all 2.3 million households in Ontario in 1972 was such that one-fifth (459,000) of all households had income of less than \$5,000. The second fifth (379,000) had incomes between \$5,000 and \$8,000. The middle fifth (499,000) was between \$8,000 and \$11,000. The next "quintile" (488,000) was between \$11,000 and \$15,000 and the top fifth (444,000) of households had incomes in excess of \$15,000.²

It is difficult to believe — but nevertheless true — that in 1972, only one-fifth of all households in Ontario had incomes over \$15,000. In 1976, one-fifth of all households in Ontario had incomes of over \$18,000 or \$19,000. In other words, 80 per cent of the households in Ontario had incomes of less than about \$18,500.

How much income do you need to buy a new house in the suburbs? The general rule of thumb governments use is that people should spend about 25 per cent of their income on housing. With that assumption, a family with an income of \$25,900 can afford to pay \$62,000 for a house; a family with an income of \$16,000 can afford to pay \$39,000 and a



family with an income of \$12,300 can afford to pay \$30,000. Obviously, some people are willing to scrimp and save so they can buy a home and such people will put 30 per cent or 35 per cent of their income into housing expenses; families with low incomes find that unless they put 40 per cent or 45 per cent of their incomes into paying for housing they simply won't have anywhere to live.

Using the 25 per cent, here are the incomes required for the new suburban housing at the price levels prevailing in Toronto, other southern Ontario centres, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Victoria in 1976:

| | Purchase Price \$ | Annual family income required \$ |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Detached | 75,000 | 30,000 |
| Semi-detached | 62,000 | 25,000 |
| Row | 60,000 | 22,000 |

It is clear that this new suburban housing cannot be afforded by the vast majority of people. In fact, it is only the top half of the top fifth of the population that can afford to buy this housing. Almost 90 per cent of the households in Ontario are excluded from the new urban subdivisions, and the same figure applies in many other large Canadian cities.

Thus, very few people can afford the benefit of

new suburban housing. So the first and most direct problem of the suburbs is that housing there is too expensive. New houses at \$60,000 are simply beyond the means of most people.

2. The missing amenities

If you wish to go anywhere in the suburbs, you usually have to drive. This is true even though the major design elements of suburbia, as we have mentioned before, are the open space elements such as parks and walkways. Quite simply, things are spread out so much that it is a long walk to almost any destination you can think of. A quart of milk requires a drive or a long walk. Going to the library is the same, just as is finding nearby recreational opportunities. One development in the Toronto area, Markham Woods, advertises itself as "The community where kids can walk to the hockey rink." The advertisement indicates the difficulties that there are of residents being able to get places without using a car.

It is also difficult to discover informal meeting places in the suburbs. Usually there is one restaurant and one main supermarket and a few other small stores in the "town centre." But a hotel or tavern where one can sit with neighbours and drink is rare — particularly since you will have to drive to get home. These small amenities, taken for granted in cities and towns, are simply not present in suburbia. The result is that people are more



The bland strip retail suburban shopping centre, providing fast service and convenient access by car; at once a retail focus and social vacuum. Photo: Robert Hill

isolated from one another and have to establish formal links, like going to church, in order to get to know neighbours.

As well, it is usually a long way to get to work. People are forced to drive to work, not only because neighbours work in different parts of the metropolis, and therefore can't drive together, but also because public transit cannot adequately serve suburbia.

Suburbia is short of the amenities one expects in an urban area. For people who have difficulty in finding the time or money for an extensive social life, it does not work well.

3. Nowhere is somewhere

A marketing strategy used by the development industry in selling suburbia is the device of putting a name on the new community to indicate that the prospective home buyer will live in a special place. There are three categories of marketing names used. One category attempts to define the new housing as part of a town or village, the second tries to make the development sound like an old English town with a great deal of privacy, and the third attempts to indicate that the house is set well into the country and is surrounded by hills, ravines, rivers, and quite possibly rabbits, foxes, owls, and

Silk & Pines
Townhomes

**MEADOWS
OF MANVERS**

JANETVILLE

45 MINUTES TO METRO

Villas of Victoria

 **Churchill
Downs**



**Old Sheppard
Wood**

**COOKSVILLE
MEADOWS**

IN THE HEART OF MISSISSAUGA

Rosemary Gardens
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**COUNTRY LANE IN
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there isn't a better value
in **Meadowvale -**

**Briar
Ridge**

Oshawa

 **Peel
Village
Highlands**
CAMBRIDGE

Balsam Woods

beavers. If it were not so sad, it would be laughable. The following names were taken from a Toronto newspaper in March 1976:

Villages

Camelot Village
Johnsview Village
Olde Towne
Village on the Green
Village 77

English towns

Cobble Hill Estates
Millway Gate
Country Club Estates
Glen Leven Estates
John's Gardens
Cedar Mills
Lynde Gardens
Waterdown Estates
Greenmount Gardens
Parkwood Gardens

Country living

Woodstream Meadows
Tall Trees
Erin Mills
Dorset Place
Harbour Hill
Whiteoaks
Seven Oaks
Humberview Hills
Forest Hills
Waverly Hills
Churchill Downs
Thornton Woods
Milton Meadows
Queenston Villas
Woodlands
Meadows of Manvers

But the prospective purchaser gets none of this. Instead he gets a house much like every other suburban house on a street much the same as any other suburban street. The specialness of a house has been reduced to its carpeting and perhaps the colour of its walls. Given the high cost of the house, not only has the homeowner nothing unique, he probably does not even have the security of owning much of what he's bought.

4. Open space that can't be used

Residents of suburbia often think they are surrounded by open space. In one respect this is true: the land is sparsely occupied. But, on the other hand, what real open space is there? Most houses are placed directly in the centre of the lot, with a back yard and front yard of similar size. The two side yards of a 5 or 6 foot width cannot be used for much of anything. It is difficult, for instance, to install a swimming pool or establish a vegetable garden, without eating into the space required for outdoor living.

And, while streets are very wide, there is little that can be done with the space on either side of



Suburban land is under-utilized because of excessive setbacks and wide lot widths. Note left-over "grass island" in center of curve of road. Photo: Robert Hill

them. Tradition prevents people from actively using the front yard, with its large street allowance in front of the 20-foot minimum setback, and a further five-foot boulevard thrown in. The same is true of the setbacks for schools, or factories, or apartments. The space is so poorly distributed that it is open but of little value.

THE PROBLEMS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

If suburbia has these serious problems for the people who live there, why do municipal governments continue to permit their kind of development with no real effort to change or improve it?

What is it that local government sees in suburbia that allows this development form to be used in an unending fashion? Do the benefits of suburbia to the municipality outweigh the disadvantages to ordinary people? Is suburbia the best form of de-

velopment to satisfy the requirements of local government?

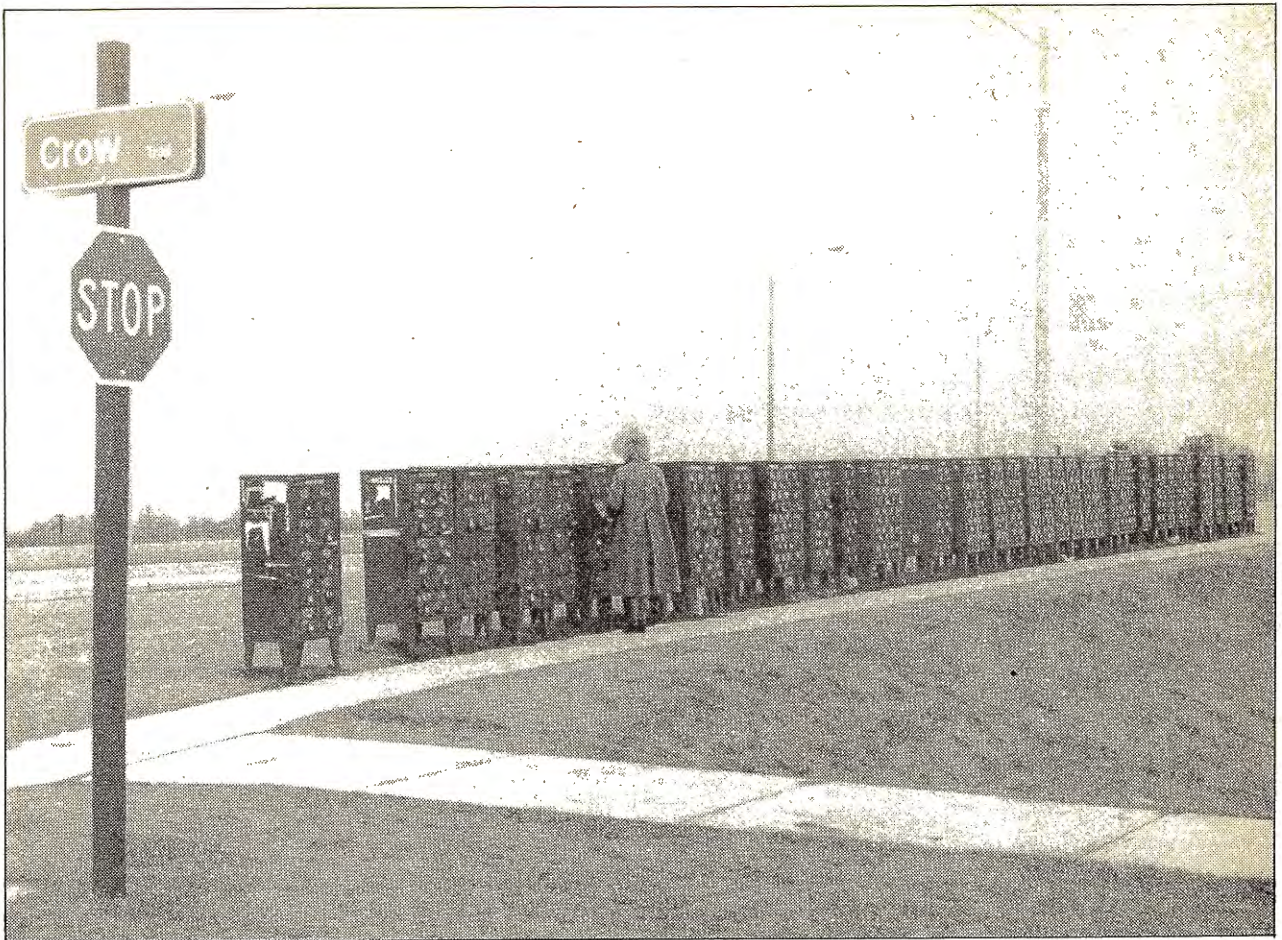
In fact, suburbs cause problems for municipalities and for all urban residents.

1. Assessment

The example of Don Mills indicated that the development form was thought to be satisfactory if a residential/ industrial split of 60/40 were maintained. It was expected that this would ensure that the residential units did not end up costing the municipality money and that any deficit would be compensated for by the industrial assessment.

Unfortunately, no studies have been done to suggest that the 60/40 split is appropriate. Perhaps 50/50 would be satisfactory, or perhaps 70/30. No one seems to know for sure.

But there are problems with continuing this approach. In fact, these are now revealing themselves where municipalities find their industrially-designated land is remaining idle, and factories built speculatively sit vacant. In Metro Toronto, some 20-million square feet of factory space (that is about 10 per cent of all industrial space) is vacant.



Mail delivery by "suburban service" means a half-mile walk to gang-boxes serviced by private contractors, because the Post Office does not provide door delivery to areas outside regular postal districts. Photo: Robert Hill

Industry is simply not developing to the levels expected. The example of Ontario is instructive in this regard.³

According to a recent study by the Ontario Government, in 1951 almost 55 per cent of all employment was in manufacturing and construction, whereas in 1971, this figure had dropped to 40 per cent. Indications are that service employment will continue to grow as a percentage of total employment, and industrial employment will drop. This means that an Ontario municipality's ability to attract industrial assessment to offset low residential assessment has decreased and will continue to do so.

The assessment issue can be looked at in another way. A recent study has been done by the Region of York, just to the north of Toronto, on the financial impact of new suburban communities.⁴ The study was specifically directed to the financial ramifications of a provincial housing policy which encouraged low-cost housing by means of various types of government assistance to the developer, the homeowner, and the municipality. Even with all these forms of assistance, the study concludes that each new dwelling built under Ontario Housing Action Program will produce a deficit in tax dollars

for the period from 1976-1981. The size of the projected deficit is somewhat frightening. In constant 1974 dollars, the deficit would be a high of \$535 per unit in 1976, and a low of \$337 per unit in 1981.⁵ The Don Mills model was followed with each development, save for the exclusion of industrial uses.

What this means is not that the form of development helps the municipality in its attempt to raise the great sums of money to fund the municipality at a reasonable mill rate; rather, that every housing unit actually costs the municipality money and mill rates must be increased to a level that is probably politically unacceptable. From the point of view of local government, every new suburban house adds to everyone's tax bill.

It would be interesting if cost-benefit studies were undertaken for suburban developments in the same way as they have been undertaken for development alternatives in the city. What the York study seems to indicate is that, from a financial point of view, suburban development is extremely costly for municipalities and taxpayers.

2. Support costs

Maintaining municipal services in suburbia is an expensive job. The crunch really comes in the "soft" services field. Take, for instance, the protec-

tive services of fire, ambulance, and police. Each of these functions usually relies on a response time, i.e. if a call is received about a fire, then the fire truck should be on the scene of the fire within three or four minutes. To ensure that this happens, fire stations must be distributed in such a way that the response time is met. Response time does not relate to the number of people who live within the response boundary, but rather to the size of the area. The response boundary will be about the same whether there are 15,000 people living within the boundary, or 5,000. The same is true for police and ambulance services.

The difference, however, comes in per capita costs. If the cost of the fire service in the response boundary is \$20,000, then if 10,000 people live within the boundary the cost is \$2.00 per person, whereas it is only \$1.00 per person with 20,000 people. While the lower density might require slightly lower service levels, in a metropolitan area there is a tendency to ensure equality of service.

A similar situation prevails for "hard" services. Regardless of density, a six-inch water main must be provided for fire fighting purposes, even though a typical suburban street might require only a two-inch service for all residential needs. On a per capita basis, hard service costs are high in the suburbs.

The same situation prevails for facilities which are not highly used because of low population densities: libraries, parks, sports facilities, etc. In many cases, municipalities charge fees in order to allow suburban residents to participate in publicly-run recreational programs. The fee helps to cover a cost which could not be garnered from taxes because tax rates are already high enough. In the Borough of Scarborough, to use a Toronto example, the municipality has decided that local residents must be responsible for equipping local parks with whatever swings, teeter-totters, etc. are demanded by children. Thus the community spends much time and energy fund-raising for expenses that would normally be funded through property taxes.

Maintenance costs of suburbia are higher than people would like. Local government tries to mitigate these costs by raising money in ways that appear less onerous than the property tax, although their effect is probably just the opposite.

From a municipal standpoint, there is probably a density at which services are most economical. Densities that are too high or too low create problems of their own. The low density areas of suburbia increase the costs of municipal government for all taxpayers, suburbanites and urbanites both.

3. Transportation

Perhaps the most significant problem posed by suburbia for government is transportation. Many residents work in downtown offices, some others work in offices not in the downtown, and a few

might work in scattered factory buildings. The major transportation need relates to those working in downtown office buildings.

Of course the most efficient and economic form of urban transportation is public transit. This is argued from both an environmental and an economic point of view. Public transit requires enough people going in enough directions in any one time period to make the transit viable economically. Money is supplied both by riders (in the payment of fares) and by government grants. Experience indicates that the fares collected from suburban public transit are so small that massive government grants are required in order to keep a suburban transit system afloat. Unfortunately, few studies are available which give any hard data on this point. However, in the City of Toronto a major transportation study undertaken by Metro and the Provincial Government⁶ indicated that each suburban rider was subsidized to the tune of \$75 per year by each city rider.

In the past, two-zone systems were used in Toronto requiring suburban residents to pay a double fare in order to reach the downtown area. The double fare helped to compensate for the long distances travelled. However, after suburban representation increased in regional governments, the double fare system was abolished. Transit systems in many Canadian cities have found themselves facing major deficits.

In Metro Toronto, for instance, from its formation early in the century until 1970, the Toronto Transit Commission paid for itself out of the fare box. The effect of serving suburbia has been dramatic, and in six short years, the TTC deficit has jumped from nil to \$56 million per year. The deficit is a direct result of attempting to provide transit services to the suburbs.⁷

Experiments have been tried in providing transit for suburbia, the most notable of which in Toronto was Dial-A-Bus. In this arrangement, a prospective rider would call bus headquarters and request a bus which would pick him up at his home within 10 or 15 minutes. A flat fee of 50 cents or 75 cents was charged and the rider would be delivered to a subway station. This experiment proved to be extremely costly, with a deficit of approximately \$1.75 per rider. Attempts to provide fixed route services and services on demand have both proved to be equally expensive.

It is easy to see why this problem arises. Densities are such that there are simply not enough people living in any particular locale to follow a transit system to work efficiently.⁷ Suburban densities range from 15 persons per net residential acre to about 50 persons per net residential acre. Given that a great proportion of the people are housewives or children, who do not travel regularly, the potential ridership is extremely low. As well, the distances to be travelled are very great and



The empty bus in suburbia: a vicious circle of low density, few passengers, enormous deficit, and thus massive subsidies from tax dollars. Photo: Robert Hill

the time involved in a common conveyance vehicle, stopping and starting every two blocks, means that journeys are time-consuming.

Thus suburban areas have usually turned to the automobile as the only viable method of transportation. It allows people a great deal of flexibility in getting where they want to go and its public costs are related only to the capital expenditures and maintenance costs associated with those roadways. The real costs involved in private transportation are paid for by the automobile owner: fuel, insurance, depreciation, and automobile maintenance. Individuals seem much more willing to bear high costs for something they own and control than they are for a public service which in the end might be cheaper.

However, the use of the private automobile leads to the demand for newer and wider roads and for urban expressway systems. These expressways are usually oriented to the place where most people want to go, downtown. Both for the suburban resident and the suburban politician there is no ques-

tion but that the automobile is the only reasonable way of transporting suburbanites. Public transit is simply too expensive, too infrequent, and too uncomfortable in relation to the private automobile.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that as long as suburbia remains in its present form, all the goodwill in the world will not get people out of their automobiles and into transit. For the suburbanite, public transit doesn't work.

THE EFFECT OF SUBURBS ON CITIES

Suburbs have their implications not just for suburbanites and for municipal governments. They also have a powerful effect on overall urban form: on the rate at which cities use up agricultural land, on the ways in which "urban" land is used or underused and on the density and form of the rest of the city.



Segregation and isolation of land use in the core areas of Canadian cities compounds problems of accessibility, and ultimately eliminates cultural activity during non-business hours. Photo: *Toronto Past and Present* D. Kirkup 1973

There are clear and distinct differences between the form of development in the last 20 years, and the form of urban development in the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, residential densities of the suburbs are much less than the densities of the city cores. Figures that are available for Metro Toronto clearly indicate the extent of the differences. The population per square mile in Metro Toronto as of 1971 averaged 8,633 persons. In the City of Toronto, which is the portion of Metro developed largely before the Second World War, the density is 19,000 persons per square mile, whereas in Etobicoke, a suburb within Metro, largely developed between 1945 and 1970, the density is only 5,908 persons per square mile.⁸

But suburban industrial areas are equally low-density. New industrial estates developed in suburbia have a square foot index of 0.2; for every 10 square feet of land there are only 2 square feet of floor space. This is visible in the extensive green space and parking lots surrounding new industrial buildings in the suburbs, and in the fact that al-

most every new industrial building is only one storey high. In the central city, industrial buildings often have three or more floors, and no green space to speak of. In central Montreal and Toronto, developers are now beginning to build relatively high industrial buildings — 10 or more storeys.

Along with the clear differences in land use densities, the mixture of uses one associates with the city is simply not present in the suburbs. In many inner-city neighbourhoods, there are corner stores; small factories in back lanes; apartments over stores; row houses; semi-detached houses; small apartment buildings; institutional uses. This jumble of uses is what Jane Jacobs praises in both *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, and *The Economy of Cities*.

In the suburbs, as we have seen, uses are isolated and each has a special place. Some people claim that this means that suburbs are uninteresting and that they will die unless a greater mixture of uses occurs. In fact, the specialization of land use in the suburbs leads to a specialization of land use in the

city centre, and perhaps the decline of the city centre itself.

In a landmark study, *The Pickering Impact Study*, the Toronto architectural firm of Diamond and Myers, portrayed the problem of specialized uses.⁹ The study concludes that the special uses of suburban land for housing and industrial purposes leads directly to a specialization of land use in the central core for office purposes. Further, the specific forms of housing provided in the suburbs (mostly for families) in turn leads to specialized use of residential land downtown for single persons. The study, which also dealt with the effects of the then proposed Toronto Pickering Airport as well as the then proposed North Pickering Community, ends on a note of despair:

The tendencies described in this report exist. They need to be arrested. The construction of the proposed North Pickering Airport and town will only reinforce the tendencies the city wishes to avoid, which are:

- concentrating office specialization in the core area;
- segregating the city into special use areas;
- hastening the movement of industry out of the city;
- eliminating moderately priced housing and decreasing home ownership;
- decreasing densities over the entire urban area;
- squandering the use of serviced land;
- increasing the problems of accessibility, commuting times and congestion in the core.¹⁰

The exact relationship between density or the intensity of land use and land specialization is not entirely clear. It would appear, however, that the less intensely land is used, then the less likelihood there is of a jumble of different activities.

Suburbs can, in fact, be redefined as urban sprawl; controlled sprawl, certainly, but sprawl nevertheless. Suburbia is based on the under-utilization of land accompanied by a specialization of use. Put into these terms, it is easier to see that suburbia is not just an opportunity gone wrong, but actually the cause of many urban problems. Suburbia might have been an appropriate experiment in the case of Don Mills, but the fact that the experiment was highly profitable to the corporate developer should not have meant — even though it did — that Don Mills would be repeated monotonously across Canada to enrich the development industry, leaving urban and suburban residents and municipal governments to deal with the consequences of this pattern of development whatever they proved to be.

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1. This chart is taken from *Residential Land Development in Ontario*, prepared for the Urban Development Institute of Ontario, November 1972.
 2. *Housing Ontario 1974*, Government of Ontario
 3. *Ontario's Future: Trends and Options*, Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Inter-Government Affairs, March 1976. The information is cited in Table 8.

4. *The Financial Impact of Short-Term Action Housing Programs*, Regional Municipality of York, January 1975. This study was undertaken by Stephenson & Kellogg.
5. The analysis related to two proposed suburban neighbourhoods: Pine Valley Village, a development that would house 20,000 people on 1,000 acres of land, and Milliken Mills, a site of just under 1,000 acres, that would house 22,800 people.
6. *Metropolitan Transportation Plan Review*, 1975. This study consists of 64 volumes and analyzes the major transportation problems and probable solutions in the Toronto area. It is commonly referred to as the Soberman Report, after the director of the study, Richard Soberman.
7. A new study by an American organization, Regional Plan Association, has recently been released, as reported in *Regional Plan News*, August 1976, No. 99. It notes that suburban densities of seven units per acre can adequately support bus service every half hour — provided; there is a government subsidy over and above fares, of 50-75 cents per rider. The study is entitled "Where Transit Works: Urban Densities for Public Transportation." It appears that the problems in the United States are significantly more severe than in Canada.
8. *Soberman Report No. 64*, p.8. This table also compares the density of the central portion of American cities. The following figures represent the population per square mile in the central portion of these cities: Baltimore — 11,568; Boston — 13,936; Chicago — 12,283; Cleveland — 9,893; Detroit — 10,953. It is interesting that the density of the City of Toronto proper is much greater than that of American cities. No one would claim that Toronto proper was overcrowded.
9. *The Pickering Impact Study*, prepared for the City of Toronto Planning Board, June 1974.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 261

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Alternatives to the suburbs

Are there alternative ways in which cities can grow that are more attractive economically, politically, and socially than suburbia? The answer is, of course, yes. The more difficult question is to determine what changes are needed to bring about a switch from suburban to alternative models for city expansion.

Suburbia is now under attack on two fronts, each of which contains the elements of a new approach to development.

CHEAPER HOUSING

One of the attacks is over the matter of house prices. This has been a major concern of ordinary people for many years, but only recently has information been gathered in a systematic fashion, and theories developed which account for the problem.

On the one hand are studies by the Urban Development Institute (usually undertaken by Andrzej Derkowski) and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (The Spurr Report)¹. While UDI claims that high prices are mainly a function of insufficient supply of land caused by the intricacies of a bureaucratic approval process (the "red tape" explanation), Spurr appears to place more emphasis on the high resale prices demanded for older homes. Spurr commits the error of thinking that high house prices arise from the prices demanded by individuals selling *existing* houses on the market

alone, and ignores the crucial role in overall housing supply of the quantity of *new* houses placed on the market by the development industry and the supply and pricing policies followed by the few large corporations that dominate the supply of new lots and houses in most cities.

On the other hand are the theories of James Lorimer, which are based on the documentation found in the Spurr Report.² Lorimer theorizes that high housing pricing are a direct result of the control of land by a handful of large companies which control the market in order to maximize profits in both the short and long run. This approach appears to be borne out by the history of Don Mills, where the developer consciously followed policies about the quantity of lots supplied and pricing to maximize both profits and house prices.

Any attack on house prices ends up being an attack on suburbia, even if it appears at first glance to be peripheral to the question of form. Outrageous prices demand an alternative.

The second approach to the high house price problem relates to the cost of servicing suburban land. In 1973, the Government of Ontario released a little-noticed study³ which analyzed how servicing requirements might be reduced in order to lower the cost of the hardware that is buried in suburban land. Like studies of the late nineteen forties and early nineteen fifties, this approach addresses itself to a reduction in construction costs. But it also hints at the necessity for alternatives to suburbia.

Two recent studies have tied together the problems of servicing costs and house prices. Although one study was commissioned by the Ontario

Ministry of Housing, and the other by the Urban Development Institute, both argue that it is time to develop a new urban form rather than continue with Don Mills-style suburbia.

The Ontario government study concludes as follows:

(i) Significant cost savings are possible using standards already accepted in various parts of the province. Our studies show that savings in the order of \$6,000 to \$8,000 per lot are possible. These estimates are based on cost analysis using actual plans of conventionally designed subdivisions and comparable designs using reduced standards which are merely a compendium of the most progressive current practice in the province and, indeed, many of which are minimums recommended by the largest mortgagor of subdivision housing (CMHC). Savings of this magnitude could reduce an owner's monthly mortgage payment by \$70 or more. Translated to a broader scale it can be conservatively estimated that \$100 million could be saved annually in the province.

(ii) While there are significant savings in reduced engineering standards, more rational site planning standards are the key. Of the total savings identified approximately 75 per cent can be attributed to permitting reduced lot sizes – down to 30 x 80 feet for a single, detached dwelling in the major metropolitan areas, and to 30 x 100 feet elsewhere, together with comparable reductions in lots for other house types. Our studies show that such lots can meet CMHC standards for outdoor space and separation between dwellings and also provide a good quality living environment. In fact, compared to conventional practices, our proposed standards and cost comparisons include increased landscaping and privacy screening, more park space landscaped for children's play, and improved control over design and siting of individual units. The remaining 25 per cent of cost savings can be largely achieved through changes in three key engineering standards – the type of storm drainage system, right-of-way and road widths, and finally the method of connecting sanitary sewage and water service to individual lots.⁴ (Emphasis added.)

This second conclusion requires that residential densities in the suburbs be increased. Generally, the proposal is that the conventional suburban density of 6.46 units per acre be doubled to 12.4 units per acre. This would produce slightly under 50 persons per acre, still significantly less than the 80 persons per acre which appears to be the rule in urban areas developed prior to the Second World War. However, it is interesting that the increasing density is seen to be necessary in order to reduce housing costs. The study does not address itself to the larger problems associated with low densities, so it is only a partial answer to the problems of suburbia.

Unfortunately, the Ontario government study repeats all the assumptions of Don Mills: a non-grid street pattern; specialized land use with no mixture of uses; a separation of pedestrian and vehicle through the use of a walkway system. Presumably (although the study does not deal with this) the same type of community and neighbourhood structure is expected to be followed, with land set aside on the fringes for industry. At best, it

calls for a refinement of the Don Mills model.

The second study prepared by the Urban Development Institute is entitled *Lowering the Cost of New Housing*.⁵ This study takes the view that the property industry has been prevented by government from providing houses for middle income persons. As the foreword notes:

The following development plan has been prepared in an attempt, once and for all, to set the record straight on three counts: 1) the housing development industry's concern about the problem; 2) the industry's clear ability to solve it; and, 3) the industry's clear ability, given a legitimate opportunity to do so within the context of the current housing and land market – and with the only necessary government assistance being a relaxation of some of the key restrictions that have collectively caused the problem in the first place.

The booklet presents a plan for a 200-acre hypothetical site. According to the study:

The plan would achieve three critical objectives, all of which we believe to be socially and economically desirable; 1) produce quality housing at sale prices far below those which must result from today's development requirements; 2) conserve land and restrain urban sprawl through more efficient land use planning while retaining basic environmental amenities; and 3) minimize long-term transportation and other servicing and tax costs to residents, by improving community compactness.

It is notable that the study addresses the very issue that the provincial study misses: efficient land-use planning.

The hypothetical plan proposes a tripling of net residential density from the traditional density of 35 persons per acre to 101.8 person per acre. This is accomplished by increasing units per acre from 9.6 to 30.4. The study makes it clear that, even with this density, no building, including apartment houses, exceeds three storeys in height. The report claims that such a plan could (depending on land costs) allow three-bedroom, semi-detached houses to sell for \$36,000 at 1976 land and construction prices.

Again, the Don Mills model is generally adhered to with the dead-end road systems and separation of uses. The site considered is not large enough to indicate whether or not the neighbourhood and community model, along with the town centre, will be pursued. However, given that the form of this community is similar to the Don Mills model, this is probably the case. There are many problems with the study's proposal. Units are relatively small and access to them is poor, problems that might be resolved if a grid road system was employed along with strip shopping.

However, given these limitations, it is clear that the report is calling for a significant shift in the design of suburbia. If planners could persuade themselves that they need not necessarily follow the Don Mills model, we would see a totally different approach to providing new housing.

The accompanying chart from the report compares the present form of suburbia with the hypothetical plan:

Figure 2 Site Statistics

| TYPE OF UNITS | NO. OF UNITS | | POPULATION |
|---|--------------|-----|-----------------|
| Single Family | 594 | 50% | 2257 |
| Semi-Detached | 144 | 12% | 547 |
| Street Townhouses | 100 | 8% | 380 |
| Multiple Family | 120 | 10% | 456 |
| Apartments | 240 | 20% | 720 |
| Total | 1198 | | 4360 |
| Length of Street | | | 24,820' |
| ACREAGES | | | |
| Residential (Single Family-Semi-Detached) | | | 106.5 |
| Street Townhouses | | | 6.1 |
| Multiple Family | | | 8.0 |
| Apartments | | | 4.0 |
| Schools | | | 12.1 |
| Parks | | | 10.0 |
| Watercourse | | | 12.8 |
| Church-Highway Commercial | | | 2.0 |
| Roads | | | 38.5 |
| Total | | | 200.0 AC |
| Unit Gross Density | | | 6.0 u.p.a. |
| Population Gross Density | | | 21.8 p.p.a. |
| Unit Net Density | | | 9.6 u.p.a. |
| Population Net Density | | | 35.0 p.p.a. |
| Park Dedication 5% | | | |

Figure 3 Site Statistics

| TYPE OF UNITS | NO. OF UNITS | | POPULATION |
|---|--------------|-----|-----------------|
| Semi-Detached | 466 | 14% | 1631 |
| Quadruplex | 616 | 19% | 2156 |
| Duplex | 396 | 12% | 1386 |
| Group Housing | 1322 | 40% | 4627 |
| Apartments | 511 | 15% | 1278 |
| Total | 3311 | | 11,078 |
| Length of Street | | | 22,880' |
| ACREAGES | | | |
| Residential (Semi-Detached, Quadruplex, Duplex) | | | 108.8 |
| Group Housing) | | | 10.4 |
| Apartments | | | 13.3 |
| Schools | | | 27.6 |
| Parks | | | 12.8 |
| Watercourse | | | 1.0 |
| Commercial | | | 26.1 |
| Roads | | | |
| Total | | | 200.0 AC |
| Unit Gross Density | | | 16.6 u.p.a. |
| Population Gross Density | | | 55.4 p.p.a. |
| Unit Net Density | | | 30.4 u.p.a. |
| Population Net Density | | | 101.8 p.p.a. |
| Park Dedication 1 acre for 120 units | | | |

Almost three times as much park space is provided in the hypothetical plan, and much less road space is used. The study proposes reducing the traditional 66 foot right-of-way to 40 feet, with a land saving of almost 40 per cent. If roads operate just as well on 40 per cent less land, won't the same thing be true for factories, schools, and retail stores? The report implies that suburban land is grossly underused.

The UDI approach, in spite of its rather startling conclusions regarding cost and amenities, is traditional. It argues that given more flexibility, more opportunity to do what they want, the industry can produce housing that ordinary people can afford. It is an argument that has been heard for a long time, and given the industry's domination of municipal and (at least in Ontario) provincial governments, one wonders why the industry doesn't use the power it has to do the things it says it can do.

Neither study approaches the larger questions of social costs and benefits. However, according to our earlier analysis, it would appear that the social costs of the higher-density housing contemplated would decrease significantly, and the benefits might indicate a major turn-around from the Don Mills model.

CONSERVING FARM LAND

The second main area of attack on suburbia has come from farmers and environmentalists. They

argue, with considerable support from the public at large, that urban Canada cannot continue to sprawl onto otherwise productive farm land. They have popularized the concept that sprawl must stop. In Ontario these arguments were heard persuasively (in conjunction with other arguments) to stop the federal plans for a Pickering airport. They have also been raised in an attempt to save the Niagara fruit belt. In British Columbia, legislation was passed which tries to limit the extent of sprawl so that farm land is protected.

A few years ago, containment of sprawl was seen as the antithesis of growth, and thus involved a head-on challenge to the economic system. Now the argument has softened somewhat so that the question is one of the form of growth. Since growth in the short term seems inevitable, will we continue to develop in the model of Don Mills? Or will we make better use of land?

THE THREE KEY ASSUMPTIONS

If there are to be changes in the way urban growth occurs, the influence of the property industry in deciding what can or can't be done must be faced. Since Don Mills, the industry has so dominated planning that it has been difficult to make any constructive alternatives which are taken seriously. Thus, the North Pickering Project, Toronto's large public land assembly where the Province of

Ontario could explore new directions, is a 1975 version of the same thing that city has seen for the past 20 years. Before we define alternatives, we must first identify the underlying principles which the industry has ingrained so deeply in us.

The property industry in its approach to urban growth makes three assumptions that we have so far refused to question seriously.

The most important of these is that the city has no limits. Canada is a country where there is almost too much land. While we might object to certain parcels of land becoming part of the city (orchards, ravines, farm land) we rarely question the idea (say) of new cities in the Canadian Shield (Richard Rohmer's Mid-Canada Corridor), since no one sees anything in *that* land that might get in the road of a spreading metropolis.

If the city has no limits, then it is only natural for it to spread out and grow.

This concept, though, is relatively new. Cities used to have walls around them for protection. These established definite and clear limits. Land had to be used wisely since its supply was finite. If densities were too low, then the land would have to be developed in a more rational way to keep the city alive. Alternatively, if densities were too high, and social problems of one sort or another began to develop, changes would have to be made. After all, with a walled city, there was nowhere to escape.

Cities today could use the kind of definite limits to their physical size imposed by city walls, and these limits would be a protection for the people who live in them. Not physical walls, but real limits which could not be changed, lines beyond which development in any form was simply not possible. Not only would such an arrangement force a community to make decisions as to how it would allow its finite amount of land to be developed; it would also mean that municipal government, local decision-making, would have a real and fixed locus.

Developers have sold us a dangerous principle in conceiving of cities with no limits. That idea contains a second assumption of the property industry: there is no such concept as the "appropriate" use of land.

In downtown cores, the large developers like Cadillac-Fairview, argue that high densities — both residential and commercial — are dictated by the market. If you want more reasonable densities, then you will have to find land that is priced at a rate that allows it. In the suburbs, no arguments of any substance are made about densities, since the Don Mills model is accepted without question.

In fact, most discussions about the intensity of land use revolve around the cost of the land, not the appropriateness of how intensely land is used.⁶ Having accepted the bait, many people argue that the lower the density in the suburbs, the better the development, assuming (as is usually the case) that

land is relatively cheap.

But appropriateness of intensity and use does not relate to land cost: it relates to the final results that one wishes to obtain. In an economy where most important decisions are made by people who are concerned mostly about profits and the ability to generate further capital, public decision-making has little real effect. However, land use planning is supposed to bring other criteria to bear on decisions about land use and densities. Strange that no one dares talk about the appropriateness of land use, even if the attempts to establish proper implementation techniques do not always succeed.

Suburbia represents a deliberate underuse of land, as inappropriate as the severe overuses that occur in city centres. The under-development of suburbia raises complex problems which cannot be readily perceived. Using the "appropriateness" approach, perhaps we can begin to develop solutions that avoid problems rather than repeat the actions which cause the problems. That won't happen until the myth that land use should be a function of land values alone is understood as a rationalization by the property industry for making profitability the only criterion for development decisions.

The third assumption is that the country can be assumed into the city. One manifestation of this assumption is the countrified names given to new subdivisions. Another is the idea, rarely challenged, of the satellite city, the new community (Don Mills is a good example of 20 years ago) that will either be linked to, or appended to, the city.

It is a subtle concept. It contains elements of the ideas of Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright which attempt to tie together the city and the country. It leads to the belief that four houses on an acre of land is somehow "better" than 15 houses, perhaps for the same value-laden reasons Macklin Hancock used to explain house design and lot size in Don Mills.

The development industry has employed the muddled distinction between city and country to great effect, although it is hardly noticed. The best example of the industry's diligence is seen in the leapfrog use of land. This occurs where development proceeds first on the portion of land owned that is most distant from the urban fringe, and slowly the land in between is built up. Whereas the strategy behind the technique is to either ensure or increase the value of the land leapfrogged, the strategy takes on a respectable air as we somehow assume that the new development is closer to being part of the country.

The Toronto area has a number of examples of leapfrogging: Meadowvale, which is sold as a suburb in the country, when in fact it is simply the development of the most distant portion of a very large land assembly; and the North Pickering project. The latter is fascinating, since it is to be built



More sprawl on developer-owned land, now at a higher density, but still based on the Don Mills model — this is the solution proposed in the UDI study *"Lowering the Cost of New Housing"* Toronto 1976 Photo: UDI

on land assembled by the government of Ontario. Provincial reports make it clear that the major purpose of the proposal is to attract development to the east of Toronto. While rural aspects of the proposal are prominent (keeping working farms and long-established towns), the idea of a satellite Don Mills-type community is really what is intended.

Acceptance of these proposals stems from the acceptance of the belief that the country can be assumed into the city. The country/city muddle has confused the judgements that are made about this matter.

The three assumptions — that the city has no limits; there is no such concept as "appropriate" use of land; the country can be assumed into the city — are very deeply ingrained and are rarely made explicit.

They are pushed by the development industry for good reason. As Taylor learned in Don Mills, giant profits come from making farm land part of the city. That can only happen if assumptions such

as the above are generally accepted. If the city had limits, then the amount of farm land available for speculation and ultimate development would be limited, and that limits profits in the long run. Given that Erin Mills in Toronto was purchased a full 15 years before it was developed, and that it is still only half completed, one can realize the time frame that the industry has in mind.

If land had to be used at an "appropriate" intensity, both for housing, industry and other commercial uses, in all likelihood most urban densities would have to increase. The growing population of cities would be accommodated on less land than is now being gobbled up. That, too, would reduce long-term profits to be made by the large corporate property owners since they would own a relatively small fraction of the land whose densities were increasing.

If ever the decision (which seems inherent in the concepts of both Howard and Wright) was made that there is a clear distinction between the city and

the country, then the problems inherent in all of the Camelot Villages, and Cobble Hill Estates and Woodstream Meadows of Canada would not be tolerated. We would reject these approaches in the same way that many of us reject highrise apartment towers as the sign of a healthy city.

The three assumptions are key to the operation of the property industry and its continued ability to turn farm land into part of the urban complex. Because of the relatively few numbers of companies which control suburban and other land on the fringes of the city, those companies can proceed at their own speed, in ways they want, to ensure maximum profits in the long run. While they could sell more houses today by increasing densities slightly, that is not in the long-term interest of the industry.

And in this, of course, lies the absurdity of the UDI report. Given the control of the industry over local councils, it would be easy enough for planning criteria to be changed to accommodate experiments. Given the desire everyone has for cheaper housing, it would be easy for the industry to change the rules in order to produce it. However, both points run contrary to the imperatives of the industry, and will be implemented only if the industry sees no alternative ways to protect its pre-eminence in the urban growth process.

ALTERNATIVES: START WITH REASONABLE HOUSE PRICES AND LIMITS TO URBAN GROWTH

The important question is not *how much* growth, but rather *what kind* of growth for Canadian cities. Attacking suburbia as a symbol of growth will attract little public support, and in fact will not help to clarify the argument.

Instead, the keys to a successful critique of the status quo lie in the questions of city limits and housing costs.

The second matter, housing costs, appears to be a subject of great public interest. If that interest can be harnessed, then alternatives to suburbia can begin to emerge in a popular way.

The secret of Don Mills, after all, was that gigantic profits lay in the land. If land could be controlled, then the industry would fare well. As the Spurr report points out, a few large firms control almost all of the land on the fringes of almost all Canadian cities. Using data collected by Spurr, Lorimer estimates that in the Toronto area alone, annual profits made by turning farm land into subdivisions exceed \$150 million.⁷

Public land banking does not reduce these profits to any noticeable degree so long as the public

land bank supplies only a small percentage of the total number of new lots developed in an urban area. As Spurr shows in his exhaustive review of all public land banking in Canada, this is true in almost every case — Saskatoon, Red Deer, and Hamilton are the only notable exceptions. Now that the industry controls the suburban land market, it sets the prices. Nor will a tax on speculative profit be of much use. In Ontario, the Land Speculation Tax Act, enacted in 1974, has been extremely ineffective. In 1975 a mere \$2 million was collected by way of this tax throughout the province. Speculation, it seems, is difficult to define in a manner that produces tax revenues.

The only reasonable course to control suburban land prices and profits is to allow governments to expropriate land at purchase price as of some day, say June 1976. In fact, to soften the blow, one could include a small profit on equity invested (say at 10 per cent) so that the developer/investor would consider an investment in land as no better or worse than, say, an investment in Canadian Savings Bonds. This type of approach would make it perfectly clear that the housing industry was not to be allowed to use farm land as the way to develop massive profits.

An expropriation act set in these terms would end the dreams that the industry has of continuing to build Don Mills again and again.

Support for such a legislative change would not be difficult to muster. Community groups, and social planning groups throughout Canada would seize on any reasonable opportunity to significantly reduce housing costs. As we have noted, in the late nineteen forties, the land component was some 10 per cent of the purchase price of a new home. It now amounts to 40 per cent or more. An approach such as the one outlined here would put land in its proper perspective.

But simply allowing a government to own developable land, even if purchased at a reasonable price, isn't good enough. Ontario's North Pickering Project is the best example of this fallacy. Governments, too, are caught in the Don Mills planning model, and somehow must be shaken from it.

The only reasonable course of action is to set firm and distinct limits to cities, limits that will not be transgressed. As noted earlier, support for such a move is developing among farming and environmental organizations.⁸ The setting of limits will develop slowly, as orchards or ravines, or marshes are under attack. But the concept of limits can be furthered if people in cities begin to define them geographically, and then begin to use energies opposing servicing schemes designed to open up more of the hinterland.

Without such limits, the suburban form will continue with all of its drawbacks.

Of course, there are variations on these approaches. They will arise from local conditions, just

as the political pressure that is mounted will depend on the politics of the particular community. Attacks on suburbia, and the keys to its demise, lie in removing the profit element from land development on the fringes, and defining in clear and absolute terms what the limits of the city will be.

1. *Land and Urban Development*, Peter Spurr, a study for CMHC completed in 1974, published in 1976, by James Lorimer & Company.
As well as the UDI study cited previously, Derkowski published "Costs in the Land Development Process" for HUDAC.
2. *Weekend Magazine*, May 22 & May 29, 1976
3. *Residential Guidelines for Residential Servicing in Ontario*, Ontario Housing Advisory Committee, December 1973
4. *Urban Development Standards, a Demonstration of the Potential for Reducing Costs*, Ontario Ministry of Housing, March 1976, p. i-ii
5. *Lowering the Cost of New Housing*, a report for the Urban Development Institute, prepared by John Bousfield Associates and Paul Thiel Associates Limited.
6. In its recent report, the Science Council of Canada states: "Despite its obvious shortcomings, we persist in the myth that the 'market place' is always the best means of determining our priorities." The Council urges higher densities for suburban land. See Report No. 25, *Population, Technology and Resources*, p. 40-1
7. See brief by James Lorimer to the Bryce Commission on Corporate Concentration.
8. Farming organizations pose a problem, since farmers are after the goodies of high land prices to compensate for the low incomes they have received. This problem must be resolved.

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REVIEWS

Reverence past

Hallowed Walls: Church Architecture of Upper Canada by Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson with photographs by Page Toles. Clarke, Irwin and Company Ltd., Toronto, Vancouver, 1975. \$24.95.

Once more we are led back to our architectural past by the capable team of Marion MacRae, Anthony Adamson, and Page Toles. Following their previous notable achievement with *The Ancestral Roof*, which dealt with the domestic architecture of Upper Canada, attention now focuses on the churches with the same happy division of labour.

Marion MacRae authors the main text providing a better written, more concentrated study with less of the conjectural social history than *The Ancestral Roof*. She enhances the story with a lively wit (it isn't often that architectural history raises a chuckle) and expands it with relevant documentation and engaging anecdote. Anthony Adamson's graceful line drawings amplify the text with reconstructions of buildings which are no longer extant or which have been greatly altered. In a helpful "postlude" he visually summarizes the Ontario development, succinctly placing it within the historical context of church architecture in the western world. Page Toles contributes workmanlike records of existing structures with accompanying enlargements of choice details. It is a highly successful collaboration well deserving the Governor-General's Literary Award (English language, non-fiction) for 1975. It reveals a sympathetic response to the subject, an understanding of denominational creeds and practices, and an extensive knowledge of the local conditions and political forces that influenced church design.

The study begins with the structures of the indigenous Amerindian cultures — the Rice Lake Serpent

Mound, the Iroquois longhouses and the earliest mission chapels. More than a token nod, this material is skillfully related to the rest of the story. It goes on to demonstrate the impact of the classical and Gothic revivals and the influence of Italianate modes. Along the way, respectful attention is paid to the "plain style" and vernacular expression.

Miss MacRae explains the disparate national forces that have affected church architecture in early Ontario. These were primarily British. Such influence was second-hand when filtered through the American colonial experience and brought here by the United Empire Loyalists. There was also frank reliance on the British precedents available in books: the published designs of the British architect, James Gibbs, or the handy pattern-books of Peter Nicholson. Frequently, as is pointed out, the nostalgic recollection of a well-known church in London or Edinburgh was sufficient to suggest the design of a spire here or a facade there. But this strong British colouration is variegated with the architectural traditions of other ethnic groups: those of the French, the Germans, or the Dutch.

The most striking impression that emerges from the book is, in fact, that of a remarkable diversity of forms, plans, and styles. It reflects the diversity of religious sects in Upper Canada, many of them, such as the Lutherans of Williamsburg Township, arriving after a prolonged search for religious and political independence. It relates, as well, to the intrusion of the Gothic style into the prevailing classical idiom. The enthusiasm for Gothic reached its peak following the effective campaign waged by English ecclesiologists throughout the eighteen forties. With a profoundly "High Church" bias, they succeeded in persuading not only Anglicans, but also Presbyterians, and to a lesser extent Roman Catholics, Methodists, and even Unitarians, that Greek was "pagan" and that only the ancient English Gothic forms were reliably Christian. In response, such local journals as the *Anglo-American Magazine* (January 1854) praised the "bold and fearless outline, expressive at once of dignity and humility" of the English village church. Its adaption to Canadian conditions ultimately led to a large degree of homogeneity in the design of On-

tario churches. (For those who are interested in the cultural aspects of the Gothic Revival, see William E. de Villers-Westfall's "The Dominion of the Lord: An Introduction to the Cultural History of Protestant Ontario in the Victorian Period" [*Queen's Quarterly*, Spring 1976].)

In detailing this evolution, Miss MacRae draws attention to builders and designers of merit. We are treated to: the cool, cubic dignity of Sharon Temple which was erected for the Children of Peace (an offshoot of the Society of Friends) under the supervision of Ebenezer Doan, a master-builder who had emigrated from Pennsylvania; the handsome altarpieces of the French Canadian Zepherin Perrault of Montreal; the rich Gothic interior of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton by William Thomas, a native of Gloucestershire; and the distinctive board-and-batten design for Parry Sound by Henry Langley, that most prolific of church architects who was trained in the Ontario offices of William Hay. We are introduced to the range of John Howard's churches, planned for the differing services of several religious groups. These include his pleasingly serviceable schemes for Holland Landing and Jordan. But surely the drawing that Miss MacRae suggests was for John Elmsley's private chapel should instead postdate Howard's churches of the early forties; and with the tracery style of its east window and such details as the stepped battlements of the tower, perhaps it owes more to medieval Irish examples such as Howard would have known from his own collection of books, than to his remembered English youth.

A further point: it is implied that the Radford brothers, George and Edward, played a significant role in the design of the cemetery chapel of St. James the Less, Toronto, by Cumberland and Storm. If this were so, one would expect to find some of the most distinctive stylistic characteristics of that most remarkable chapel further developed in the Radfords' slightly later church, "old" St. Paul's, Bloor Street, Toronto. While both churches are asymmetrically massed (true of many churches by the late fifties) and share some similarities in detail, St. Paul's as originally designed lacked the bold assertive quality in form and plan, the unusual play of contrasts, and that piquant element of surprise that marks the de-



Drawing by John G. Howard for John E. Imsley's private chapel.

sign of the cemetery chapel. It seems more likely that St. James the Less is to be ascribed to Fred Cumberland and that any similarity observed in the design of St. Paul's is due to Cumberland's influence.

Hallowed Walls is a valuable contribution to the strangely neglected field of Canadian church architecture, both for the layman and the serious student. It is the first study to deal with the subject along broad lines. Only in monographs on individual churches, denominational studies (largely from French Canada), and essays such as that included in *Ontario Towns* (by Ralph Greenhill et al., 1974) have Canadian churches previously been considered. It far exceeds the scope of works on American church architecture, with which it offers useful comparisons, and it includes for the first time many original architectural drawings. Its interest will go well beyond the borders of Ontario, for

the beginnings that were made in eastern Canada led to the developments in the west as settlement was extended. Aside from this the book has a mission, although it is not explicitly stated by its authors: by inducing its readers "to open their eyes and broaden their vision" it may discourage "loving hands" from inflicting the unsightly alterations that scarred many early churches; it may encourage the public and the custodians of these structures toward a more respectful regard for their fabrics.

Shirley Morriss

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Substantial contribution

Planning in a Human Way by Harry Lash. Macmillan Company of Canada for the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, 1976.

Learning that I had to be myself as well as a planner was not easy for me. It would have been simpler to stick to the role of imperturbable bureaucrat, but it would not have been human. The public out there, the planners, the politicians around the council table are all humans who have the feelings and potential greatness of our kind.

This quote is an indication of the underlying philosophy of planning as espoused in Harry Lash's *Planning in a Human Way*. The book is a description of the experiences of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Planning Department between 1969-75 while Lash was the director. Its greatest contribution is as an account of one planner's struggle to develop a philosophy and approach to planning which is relevant and practicable in today's changing society.

The essence of Lash's philosophy is a high degree of interaction, in a human way, among the people involved in the planning process. Lash conceptualizes this interaction in terms of a six-sided triangle which became the framework of the GVRD's approach to planning. At each point of the triangle is one of the actors included in the planning process: the public, the planner, and the politician. The triangle is six-sided because communication must flow two ways on each side; if any of the six links of interaction are broken, the framework loses effectiveness. As well, communication should be based on an awareness and acceptance of the humanness of every participant. Lash maintains that "the successful process (of planning) needs planners and politicians who know how to get behind the facelessness of the public and find the human beings who are there."

Lash begins his discussion with the "public" component of the triangle. The two-way communication inherent in the public/planner link was actualized in two ways. The

first was for the planning staff to initiate and keep contact with existing community groups, thus enabling them to take the "pulse" of public opinion. The second was the establishment of nine policy committees, comprised of planners and public, to help with liveability policies. Initially, politicians were also to sit on these committees, however this did not occur and a chance to establish the public/politician link of the triangle was lost.

Through interaction with the public, the planners learned not to expect gratitude from the public which considered participation its right, and not to expect the public to be satisfied with formulating answers it considered to be obvious — what the citizen wants is action. Most importantly, the staff learned that there is a sincere longing on the part of the public to be taken seriously by government — to be listened to and respected. It soon became obvious to the planners that planning is a process, not a plan, which must take its direction from the public.

A long list of issues emerged, which were then analyzed by the planners to determine their inter-relatedness. After further public discussion, a set of policy proposals, not a physical plan, emerged. Most important of these was the establishment of population targets for various sections of the city; these were created as a strategic way of achieving many of the desires voiced by the community. Also several existing policies were challenged.

The third component of the six-sided triangle is the politician. And this is where the effectiveness of the interactional process begins to falter. Lash offers an understanding of politicians as people and as decision-makers. He describes a workable linkage on the planner/politician side of the triangle. However, the communication flow between politicians and the public appears to be minimal throughout the book. Herein lies the greatest obstacle to the workability of Lash's planning process. Although the concept of interaction is sound, reality takes its toll.

Lash concludes the book by emphasizing his belief that human relations are the key to successful planning. In an atmosphere of uncertainty and changing values, the planner must be aware of the currently prevailing values to plan in a

human way. The road to increased awareness lies in sincere communication and the desire to understand one's compatriots. In Lash's own words:

Planners at least must try to exercise faith, hope, and especially charity; caring enough for your fellows, whatever their role; to see their human needs and help them to meet them not only with technical skill but with enough humility not to lose sight of our own shortcomings.

But what of the GVRD planning department since Lash left in 1975? Well, it is committed to implementing some of the liveability proposals. It is conducting research on various strategies. Sadly, the citizen participation program has been virtually emasculated; information dissemination and promotion are now the order of the day. Only one policy committee remains.

The success of Lash's approach to planning can only be evaluated in terms of personal perspectives. For every person contacted with regard to the program's success, there was a corresponding and different opinion. However, to this reviewer's mind, if only one planner still on the GVRD staff shares Mr. Lash's philosophy and if one reader is made to think, then Lash's contribution has been substantial.

The conclusions that Lash arrived at during the course of his six years with the GVRD are not necessarily new. To some, they may even appear obvious. That they are held by a practicing planner and woven into a philosophy of planning and have been applied relatively successfully is new. In another context, once we leave the cloistered and supportive world of university and if we choose to work as planners within the system, it does not take us long to realize that Lash's ideas are really quite unique in the "real world" of planning.

Unfortunately, planners as human beings can only do so much — Lash himself admitted that he was burned out. Let us hope that others, perhaps with even greater insight, can keep the fire alight. This is one of those books that all planners should read. And it is free from the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. But write soon; the hassle to get a copy leads this reviewer to believe there has been a very limited printing.

Chris Guild

Lacking answers

Neighbourhoods in Transition by L.D. McCann. University of Alberta Studies in Geography Occasional Papers 2.

Discussions about the future of older neighbourhoods in Canadian cities are usually highly laced with philosophical and ideological statements about the processes of change which accompany aging. The arguments for and against high-rise redevelopment, white painting, or office invasion, as with so many other important subjects, are unfortunately often based neither on accurate history, nor on realistic theories.

Geographers have in recent years been helping to describe the histories of our cities, and this monograph is one of their newer contributions. The research behind it is very ambitious, following the individual histories of some 90,000 properties in Edmonton over a 30-year period in an effort to learn what has caused a house to be subdivided for multiple-family use (conversion) or to be replaced by apartments (redevelopment).

McCann found that what was going on in Edmonton between 1941 and 1971 did not accord well with previous beliefs about neighbourhood change. Based on his data, he proposes a new, three-stage description of neighbourhood development. The first stage is construction of single-family housing. Conversion occurs during the second stage, selecting primarily those houses which are larger, older, and more accessible. Conversion is not associated with a particular class of residents or quality of housing, although areas of exclusive owner-occupancy are not liable to conversion. Nor do zoning maps predict which houses are likely to be converted. The final stage is redevelopment, which occurs only within areas which already have seen substantial conversion, but avoids poorer areas, hitting particularly hard at the prestige areas of better housing with good accessibility to central city services. When redevelopment becomes common, conversion ceases, and some houses may even revert to single-family uses.

In doing this, McCann has pro-

vided us with some valuable historical analysis of the changes in housing stock in Edmonton during the period under study, but he has developed no theory to explain what happened, nor does he provide any evidence that the trends observed in one city might be common to others. Because McCann does not link these changes with the financial and policy context within which they occurred, the monograph is of little help in understanding *why* these events occurred, and no help at all in designing policies for the future.

For those people concerned with preserving a human-scale environment while allowing an area to adapt to different housing needs, the key question (which McCann acknowledges but does not address) is why the conversion common in the fifties was replaced by redevelopment in the sixties as the predominant form of change? A number of answers are hinted at in the book or can be suggested from knowledge of Edmonton, but none of them relate to McCann's carefully collected data. In the nineteen sixties, for example, federal tax policies favoured apartment construction. At the same time, the City of Edmonton began enforcing its zoning against conversions, and conducted an enthusiastic campaign against illegal basement suites. Perhaps the development policies of the city, the changes in building technologies, and the easy availability of financing indicate the areas which should be examined as causes for the pattern of redevelopment in the inner areas of Edmonton and other Canadian cities.

Audrey Stewart

Regrinding the past

The Mill by William Fox, Bill Brooks, Janice Tyrwhitt. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1976. 224 pp. \$29.50. After December 31, 1976, \$35.00

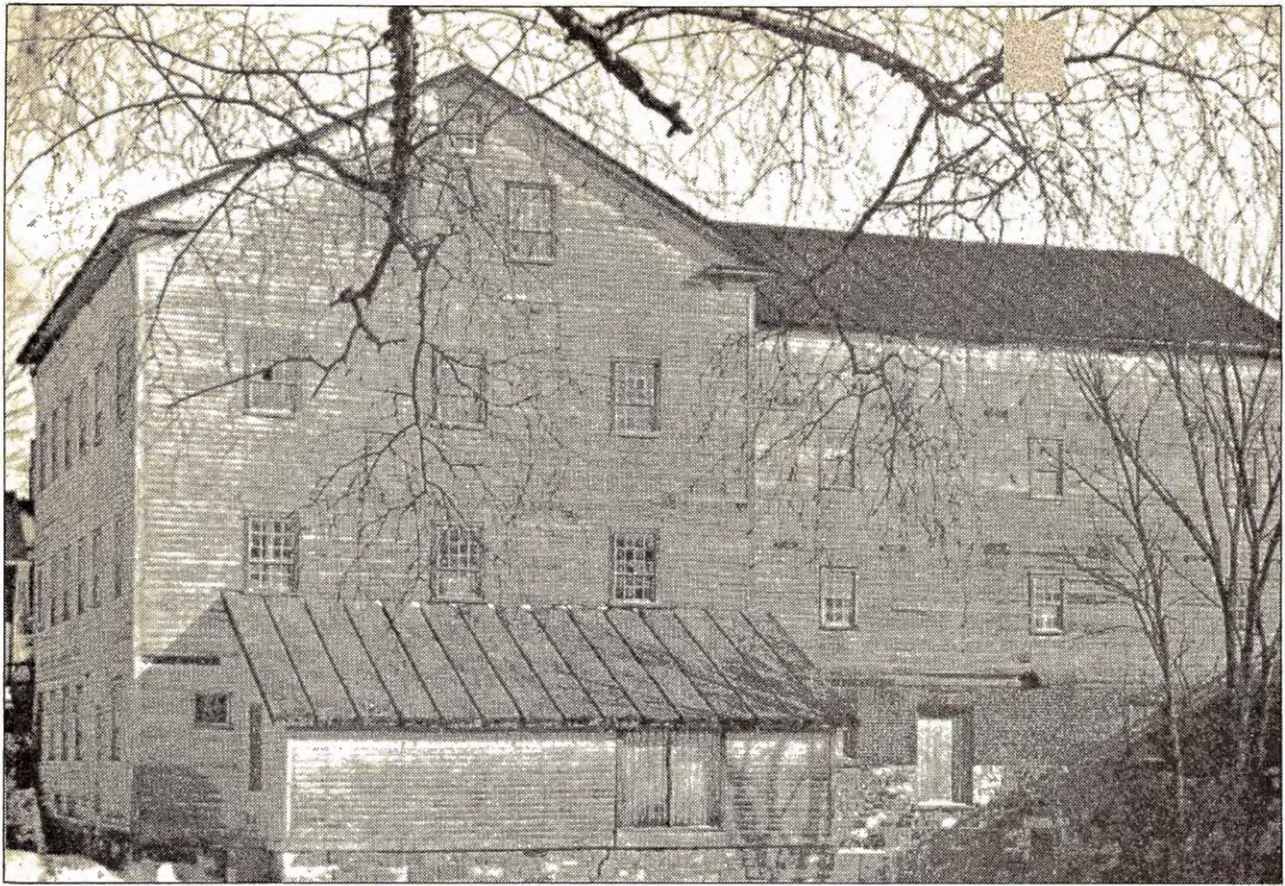
Mills of Canada by Carol Priamo. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Toronto etc., 1976. 192 pp. \$27.50

Every Christmas brings more books which review our collective past

through the reproduction of old buildings and objects. *The Mill* and *Mills of Canada* are both of this tendency, but both differ significantly from such books as Greenhill, MacPherson and Richardson's *Ontario Town*, in which a diversity of buildings and groups of buildings are represented, and in which each building or group is situated within a complex setting of typical found elements; tree lines, fences, and signs. As opposed to this approach, *The Mill* and *Mills of Canada* start with an established historical classification of building types. Thus individual books have been published on houses, churches, barns, railway stations, and lighthouses.

Of similar size and format, these two picture books also exhibit striking similarities of personal attitude to their material, but nevertheless differ in respect to geographic focus and historical perspective. *The Mill* (McClelland and Stewart, The Canadian Publishers) follows the precedent of Eric Arthur's *The Barn* (by the same publisher) and documents mills in both Canada and the United States. Priamo's *Mills of Canada*, as its title indicates, is national rather than continental in orientation, despite its branch-plant-publisher McGraw-Hill Ryerson. Though Priamo's research and illustration are drawn from a broad range of sources, including the United States, the specific mills documented are all Canadian. They basically comprise wind and water powered sawmills, grist and flour mills. Then too, Priamo's book devotes more of its space to numerous, well-chosen archival drawings and photographs, and proportionately less to text.

In addressing itself to an American as well as a Canadian market, *The Mill* not only encompasses a wider range of building types, but also straddles parallel and sometimes even contradictory historical developments in the two countries. In this respect, the precedent of *The Barn* proves to be difficult to follow, for it is evident in a broader historical perspective that mills and millers in Canada and the United States are not precisely analogous to barns and farmers in the two countries. Mills are proto-industrial building types, subject to more rapid design evolution and obsolescence during a period of transformation of systems of production. By the same token, millers are either specialized workers



Vanstone Mill, Bowmanville, Ontario (c.1850). Photo from *Mills of Canada*.

dependent upon primary producers, or — eventually — members of a newly-emergent merchant class:

While economic development in 19th century Canada can be characterized as rural expansion and attenuated industrialization, by contrast there occurred in the United States much more rapid industrial growth and consolidation. Thus there are imbalances inherent in any continentalist approach to the subject.

In *The Mill* these become evident in a variety of ways. For example, the somewhat bulky and rambling main text outlines a "general" but predominantly American historical development, while sub-chapters are intended to illuminate more particular episodes in one country or the other. This schema works well enough for such sections as those on water mills and wind mill technology, in which illustrations of examples from the two countries are diplomatically paired.

However, chapters in which historical developments themselves are used to organize the examples, fare less well, owing to the awkwardness with which sub-sections must neces-

sarily be introduced so as not to seem to neglect Canada. For example, "The Discovery of Independence" includes successive sub-sections called "The Spirit of Rebellion" and then "The Sawmill." By the middle of the book where the argument relies almost exclusively on American examples, the introduction of Canadian instances seems incidental or merely intrusive. The net result of this methodological difficulty is not only historically distorting. It also lends to the book a tone which is quirkish and anecdotal at the same time that it seems repetitious.

By contrast, Priamo's argument seems more coherent and serious, if a little conventionally organized. Her more "historical" text yields many interesting insights into patterns of development and architecture. Take the case of Bowmanville, Ontario, a town which boomed as a mercantile flour and lumber centre during the eighteen forties and fifties owing to free trade with England; and following that, reciprocity with the United States. The impressive Van Stone mill in Bowmanville documented by Priamo, but omitted by Fox, Brooks and Tyrwhitt, is an important ar-

chitectural remnant of this historical development.

Since both books are primarily pictorial, it is really the images one expects to be most rigorous and engaging. Here again Priamo's book seems superior despite the fact that it is printed on paper stock less well suited to colour reproduction than that of *The Mill*. The many fine archival photos and illustrations not only enhance Priamo's text; they also buttress the weaknesses of her own photography, which relies far too heavily on picturesque imagery. Almost three quarters of her colour general-view images are taken across mill ponds. While consistent, this exaggerates an atmosphere of bucolic contemplation, and seriously neglects the more complex dialectic the mills established historically in their settings. Insufficient attention is paid to relations of facade to road/street, of formally "public" front to "pragmatic" back, relations that presumably lie behind the strongly domestic connotations of the few "fronts" illustrated. As is so often the case in illustrated Canadian history it is the historic Notman photographs used in the book which show up this



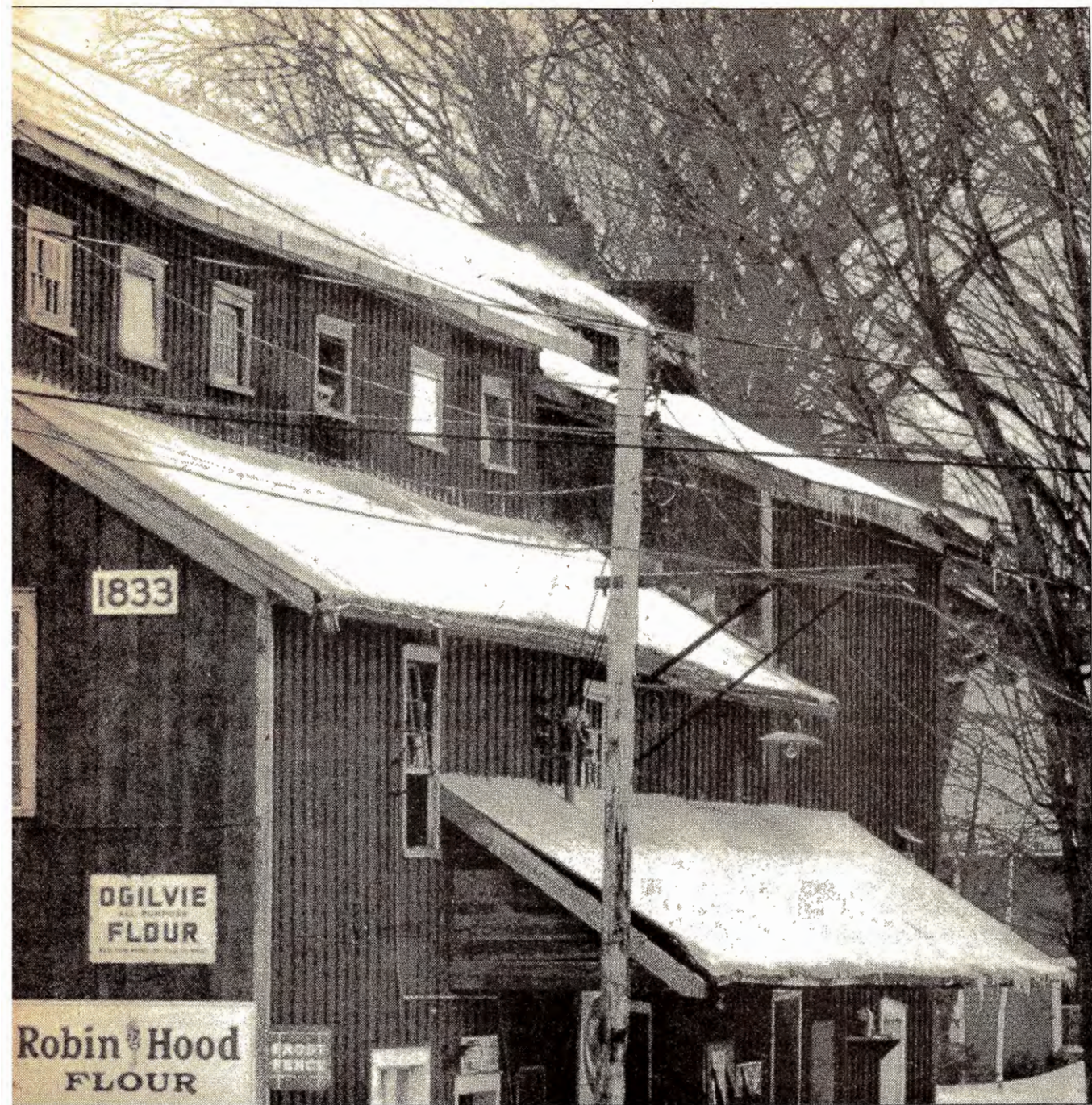
Eplett's Flour Mill, Coldwater, Ontario (C.1833). Photo from *The Mill*.

picturesqueness for the reflexive modern perception it really is.

The Mill eschews archival photographs altogether, relying instead on sepia-tone drawings and paintings, together with a series of embarrassingly unaccomplished watercolours by Helen Fox. These are intended to complement the featured images of the book, the sequence of 90 lavishly reproduced colour photographs by Brooks. As noted above, this high quality reproduction on glossy paper is superior to the often

murky work in the Priamo book. Yet despite Brooks's technical superiority, Priamo's photographs do possess some strengths, particularly a consistently oblique angle of view, a systematic depiction of permutations of building types, and a sense of material vulnerability. Brooks's on the other hand overemphasize incidental axes or water reflections, and manipulate colouring for sensational effects. Presumably intended to dramatize his subjects, his habits create instead an atmosphere often

both pompous and vulgar. Both the professional Brooks and the amateur Priamo share a predilection for the picturesque over the urbane, the greenery of the back instead of the cars, wires, and TV aerials now so integral a part of the front of many of these buildings. The most striking exception to this tendency is Brooks's photo of Eplett's Mills in Coldwater, probably the strongest image in either book. The most obvious instance of this sentimental and misleading tendency is Priamo's full-



page photo of the Van Stone mill in Bowmanville which is deliberately cropped to exclude the new highway bridge which passes within a few feet of it, and totally dominates its actual setting.

With the exception of the Mill of Kintail (shown in both books), altered in 1867 and then again in 1952, and perhaps a Pennsylvania mill converted to a pumphouse, neither book shows an alteration or re-use that in a photograph would not "pass" for a real mill. However, both

books conclude by addressing themselves to the present situation of mills. For Priamo it is a problem of more careful and more widespread restoration. For the authors of *The Mill* it is a melancholy story of disintegration and of a lingering perhaps for the re-vitalization of their technology, if not for the social base of such a decentralized technology. It is here that the authors' weakness in methodological approach and photographic or perceptual habit mesh with the present technological limbo

of the mills themselves in a disturbing way.

Unlike barns, houses, perhaps even churches; building types which still have functional and symbolic meaning, most mills don't have a function as such today. Thus the elegies of the books' photography take the buildings out of the present and into a distant mythological time and place where they can retain their character as "mills" without actually performing a milling process. Neither book seriously reflects on

what we are to do with these remarkable buildings so important to our social history, (and still so numerous in Canada according to Priamo). Do we reconstruct them all as Priamo seems to suggest, and operate them as museums? Do we capture them in photographs or paintings, and then allow them to fall into ruins? Do we attempt to retrieve their social and technological *raison d'être*? Or do we attempt to formulate a series of new uses which they might serve, and by which more layers of significance would be added to their and our history?

It is here that the authors working within the bounds of their classification have stood up too close and thus not been sufficiently conscious of other typological orders that intersect with theirs, such as road patterns and relations to street and town, which integrate these individual buildings into the physical and social matrix of the present; where their volumes, doors, windows, canopies, facades, fronts, and backs still have "function" and meaning.

Barry Sampson

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